





THE LIFE OF JOHN FISHER,

CARDINAL-BISHOP.

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THE LIFE

ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH.

SAN JOSE, CAL.

JOHN FISHER,

CARDINAL BISHOP OF ROCHESTER:

WITH AN

APPENDIX

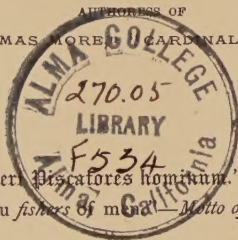
CONTAINING THE BISHOP'S FUNERAL SERMONS, LETTERS, ETC.

BY

AGNES STEWART,

AUTHRESS OF

"LIFE OF SIR THOMAS MORE," "CARDINAL WOLSEY," ETC., ETC.




"Faciam vos fieri Piscatores hominum."

"I will make you fishers of men." — Motto of BISHOP FISHER.

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INTRODUCTION.



It is to be doubted whether the records of the past furnish another instance in which a brave and at the same time a saintly spirit has been hurried to the block by an insidious snare being laid so as to bring him within the scope of a barbarous law, as was done in the case of Fisher, the aged Bishop of Rochester. "His death," writes a Protestant author, "was one of the worst passages which polluted the reign of Henry VIII., for the injustice of the case was aggravated by superadding insidiousness and breach of faith. His crime was simply an opinion against the King's supremacy, which there is too much reason to believe he was urged to give by a message from the Sovereign, who at the same time sent him a promise of indemnity."

"What an idea must we form of the Prince who could devise such unworthy means to accomplish his cruel purpose? What must we think of the subject who could be so void of feeling as to become the instrument of such perfidy? What must we conceive of the times in which judges and juries would be found to give the form and colour of justice to such base proceedings?"¹

Very beautiful indeed is the character of the aged prelate, whose biography we have attempted to write, so

¹ Hargreaves's *State Trials*, Vol. I., p. 397.

firm was the constancy and meekness with which he suffered in the cause of truth and justice.

He had been the valued friend as well as confessor of the heroic Margaret, Countess of Richmond, the most noble as well as the most learned lady of her time, she who had been, as a child widow, and mother too, whilst yet only on the verge of womanhood, with a babe but a few months old whom she reared amidst all the dangers of a civil war, and she was no less renowned for the sterling virtue which shone brightly in her character.

He was too the honoured friend of her son Henry VII., and he became the preceptor, and was the once beloved counsellor of the monarch who unrelentingly pursued the aged prelate to the block.

When the divorce question was publicly broached, the Bishop was wont to lament the injustice done to the Queen, and was heard to say, "That it was a quarrel wherein a man might well spend his life, and that he himself could find it in his heart so to do".

Though the story detailed by Sanders relative to poor misguided Anne Boleyn be received by Dr. Hall, the quaint simplicity and general truthfulness of whose now rare old work upon Dr. Fisher has been abundantly acknowledged by Protestant writers,¹ we do not follow him in his opinions regarding her birth, or those criminal charges which brought about her lamentable end.

The brilliant, frivolous maid of honour had enough to answer for without the substantiation of the fearful charge brought against herself and her own brother.

Catherine was about forty years of age when in an

¹ Mr. Hargreaves, Mr. Bruce.

evil hour the King became enamoured of Anne Boleyn, having previously given the Queen cause for pain by his professed admiration of her maid's elder sister.

Ill health, as well as the ruthless hand of time, had robbed Catherine of those charms by which she was once distinguished, and keenly must she have felt the natural advantages which her youthful rival possessed over herself.

"The historian Hall in his *Chronicles* speaks of her as a handsome woman at the time of the Field of Cloth of Gold. The Versailles portrait represents her as a serene-looking lady of thirty-three or four, the face oval, the features regular, with a sweet calm look but somewhat heavy, the forehead of a most extraordinary height; unlike most Spanish ladies, Catherine had auburn hair and a light complexion.¹ With all the sorrows that could be inflicted on a repudiated wife and a bereaved mother, this hapless queen became but too familiar, and small wonder that the faithful prelate, who stood firm in his adhesion to the Holy See, should have so warmly espoused her cause.

With reference to Anne Boleyn, the painstaking authoress of *The Queens of England* has clearly shown that she died in the bosom of the Catholic Church, that she passed hours in private conference with her confessor, and that on "Friday, the 19th of May, the last sad morning of her life, Anne rose two hours after midnight and resumed her devotions with her almoner. Her previous desire of having the consecrated elements remain *in her closet*, which in such cases is always for the pur-

¹ Agnes Strickland's *Life of Catherine*, Vol. II., p. 164.

pose of adoration, and that she termed the Sacrament 'The good Lord' proves clearly that she did not die a Protestant.¹

"When she was about to receive the Sacrament she sent for Sir William Kingston that he might be a witness of her last solemn protestation of her innocence of the crimes for which she was to die, before she became partaker of the holy rite. It is difficult to imagine any person provoking the wrath of God by incurring the crime of perjury at such a moment."

Treading recklessly under foot every obstacle that lay in her path, Anne managed to reach the fatal goal to which her desires tended, and they led her to the block at the fiat of the sensual tyrant, who was eager to put her handmaiden in her place, even as Queen Catherine had been set aside for herself. "Even-handed justice had indeed brought the poisoned chalice to her own lips. It is, however, soothing to know that she died repentant. Historians tell us that she arrayed herself in robes of yellow silk when she heard the news of Catherine's death, exclaiming, 'Now I am indeed a queen!' but that glittering bauble, the crown, encircled her brows only for four short months and a few days after the death of the broken-hearted Catherine."

We have said thus much respecting Anne Boleyn, because we have quoted mainly from Dr. Richard Hall's work whilst writing this biography.²

¹ Kingston's *Letters to Cromwell*. Ellis's *Letters*.

² Dr. Hall of Douay died in 1604, leaving the *Life of the Bishop* in MS. Copies were afterwards printed from it, one of which fell into the hands of Thomas Bailey, who sold it to a bookseller, and publicly called himself the author—A. Wood, Ath. Ox. Todd's *Life of Cranmer*, p. 21.

In the *Life of Dr. Fisher*, edited by Mr. Turner, Mr. Lewis asserts that the *Oath of Supremacy* is a name which Hall and the writers of *Sir Thomas More's Life* give to the *Oath of Succession*, because all that took it were obliged to renounce the Pope's authority. "By the way," adds Mr. Lewis, "this is a calumny that, as Bishop Burnet very justly observed, runs in a thread through all the historians of the Popish side, that the Bishop, Sir Thomas More, and the monks of the Charter-house, &c., who suffered at this time were put to death for refusing to take the oath of supremacy, whereas, supposing that the oath of succession might be so called, it is certain that by the Act that required the taking it, the penalty of refusing it was not death but only the loss of estate and liberty." This assertion, however, has been successfully refuted by the Rev. John Morris, who in a note to his works, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, page 22, says : "The indictments of the martyrs, the originals of which remain in the *Baga de Secretis*, and the summary of which is given in the Third Report of the Keeper of Public Records, above quoted, show that they died not under the Act of Succession, but for denying the Royal supremacy."

"Henry," observes Mr. Turner in his Introduction, "appears to have been fully aware of the atrocity of the whole of the proceedings against Fisher and More, and with a meanness worthy of the ferocity which sent them to the scaffold, when he was reproached for his severity, insinuated that they had been guilty of far more heinous crimes, and dictated a letter which Cromwell wrote to the English Ambassador at the Court of France," and

which will be found in the Appendix at the end of this volume.¹

“That the whole of the assertions respecting the Bishop are false is shown by the indictment, which may also be seen in the Appendix, that they are equally false in the case of Sir Thomas More may be seen by referring to Roper’s Life, where the words and letters to which probably the French King alluded, and of which he seems to have had copies, are printed.”

“The unblushing impudence with which Henry asserts that his ‘new laws’ were but revivals of ancient ones is surprising, as in making this declaration he could not have calculated upon the French King’s ignorance of their character and effects, which were already notorious throughout Europe.”²

The letter of his Holiness Pope Paul III., an abridgment of which we have given from Dr. Hall, in the list of opinions concerning the judicial murder of the Cardinal Bishop, may also be found in the Appendix in the original Latin.

It is generally supposed that the headless remains of the Bishop ultimately rested beside those of his friend and fellow-sufferer, Sir Thomas More, in the chapel on the Tower Green; there is strong reason, however, for believing that such was not the case, we therefore lay before the readers a letter from Mr. George Arnold of Milton Hall, Gravesend, on this subject.

The holy prelate was no less loved than venerated by the people of Rochester. Can it be supposed they would willingly allow his remains to lay a single day longer

¹ Lewis, Vol. I., p. 6.

² Mr. Turner, Vol. I., p. 13.

than could be avoided in that unhallowed grave, in the churchyard of All-Hallows, Barking. As Margaret Roper, by bribery or otherwise, managed to procure the head of her beloved father, so that it might be buried with her own remains in Canterbury Cathedral, so no doubt the devoted flock at Rochester managed to procure surreptitiously the headless body of the saintly Cardinal Bishop.

“DEAR MADAM,—After the Bishop’s body had been loosely interred at All-Hallows, Barking, his friends seemed to have determined to have the remains interred within the walls of his own Cathedral ; and, although I am not aware of any historical document upon the subject, I remember, as a boy, a Purbeck marble slab in the nave of Rochester Cathedral which had an ill-defined incision upon its upper surface resembling an axe, such as a headsman would use ; and the popular report, as handed down by the vergers of the Cathedral, was that under that stone the remains of the saintly Bishop (minus his head) were finally interred. Some years ago, Canon Hotham removed this stone upon the occasion of the nave being repaired with Portland slabs in lieu of the ancient red tiles. This interesting souvenir was thus removed and broken up, and nothing now remains extant probably, except these few lines (which you will be the means of perpetuating) to show that the holy Bishop’s remains sought and obtained interment within walls of ancient Cathedral consecration.

“ I am, DEAR MADAM,

“ Yours faithfully,

“ GEO. M. ARNOLD.”



BISHOP FISHER.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN FISHER

AND

HIS PATRONESS, MARGARET BEAUFORT.



IN the thirty-seventh year of the reign of the unfortunate but virtuous King Henry VI., was born in Beverley, the ancient capital of the East Riding of Yorkshire, the celebrated John Fisher, who in after years became renowned for his virtues, his learning, and his wisdom, and whose saintly life was crowned by the death of a martyr at the fiat of the inexorable despot Henry VIII., who in his wrath spared not to shed the blood of the best and holiest of his subjects, for such was the meek and saintly Bishop of Rochester, contemporary of the amiable and gifted Sir Thomas More.

His father was one Robert Fisher, whose condition in life was that of a merchant, and whose means were of that happy medium, alike removed from poverty and

riches. He died when he had reached middle age, leaving behind him two sons—John, the subject of this biography, and a younger son, who bore his father's name of Robert, both being of tender years.

A few years after the death of the merchant, Ann Fisher married a second time, and by her second husband she had three sons—John, Thomas, and Richard—also a daughter, Elizabeth, who, on reaching womanhood, became a nun in a convent at Dartford. This second marriage, however, in no way interfered with the duty Ann Fisher owed to her sons by her first husband. She gave them the best education it was in her power to afford, using for that purpose the money their father had bequeathed.

The two brothers were committed to the care of a priest of the Minster or Collegiate Church of Beverley, a church which, in olden times, was richly endowed with lands and possessions ; and here it was that John Fisher received the first elements of education.

The records we have at hand, however, give the biographer no details of the early life of one who was destined to exhibit to the world, under the despotic Tudor Monarch, the spectacle of what Dr. Hall (whose rare old work we have quoted unsparingly) terms a "stout old prelate, an Athanasian of the clergy".¹ Well would it have been had his timorous and hesitating brother prelates followed him in the austere simplicity of his life and courageous firmness of his character.

But not for very long did he remain at Beverley. The zealous master, to whose care the boy had been

¹ Dr. Hall's *Life of Bishop Fisher*.

entrusted, soon became aware that he was endowed with talents of no common order; for his genius quickly developed itself; and outstripping his companions in every branch of learning, he was speedily removed to Cambridge, where he was placed in the care of one William Melton, a learned and grave divine, under whom he soon became so proficient in his studies, that, in the year 1488, he received the degree of bachelor, and was promoted to that of master the year following.

Not very long after Fisher was chosen proctor of the University, when he took upon himself the office of the priesthood.

Then his human learning became to him a means in his hands; it was as one of the tools with which he was to work. Henceforth his profession was his occupation. In his disputations in divinity he vanquished all who contested with him, and was made Doctor of Divinity in 1501.

It was about this time that his former preceptor, Dr. Melton, was raised to the dignity of Chancellor of the Cathedral Church of York, by which means the Mastership of Michael-house, Cambridge, was left without a Master, and by the free election of all the Fellows of the House, Fisher was at once promoted to the post.

"Well had he played the part of a disciple, so who more fit to rule as master? Well had he obeyed; therefore none could better know how to govern. Firm, yet gentle, severe to himself and lenient to others, he won the hearts of all his subordinates, and was soon after chosen Vice-Chancellor."

"There can be no doubt that had this learned and

amiable man, who had been elected to this high post, been suffered to remain at Cambridge, he would have become later, Chancellor of the University—a dignity which was well worthy to adorn the highest prelate in the Church. But his fame had spread throughout England, and had reached the ears of the virtuous and noble Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, and mother to Henry VII., and eager to have him in her service, she never ceased importuning him till she had gained her end ; and Cambridge sustained a heavy loss in that of its wise and saintly Vice-Chancellor.”

And, now, says the quaint old author from whom we quote,¹ “ Vice-Chancellorship, Mastership, and all, must be laid down at her feet, who with her knees requites the courtesy, whilst she kneels unto him as her ghostly father, in which office he behaved himself so temperately and discreetly, that both the Countess and her whole family were altogether governed and directed by his high wisdom and discretion.

“ And in process of time the seed fructified within the soul of her who was his mistress. He implanted noble and generous desires, thus making her acceptable in the doing of all good works, and then he improved the advantage he had gained in winning the heart of the Countess, not in securing to himself worldly honour, but inclining her mind to deeds of mercy and charity. For Fisher beheld in her disposition a generous liberality to all indifferently, and, discovering this, he at once felt that his work was only to advise and guide her, so that her bounty should flow into proper channels, and thus earn

¹ Dr Hall of Donay, 1655.

unfailingly its due reward. And his guidance was to the effect that she should bestow abundant alms to the poor, that she should also by these self same alms redeem captives, give marriage dowers to young maidens in poverty and distress, employ poor labourers in the construction and repairing of bridges and highways ; and in such charitable works as these it was his wont to implore her, who was herself easily won, to employ the talents God had given her with so bountiful a hand, in such a way that she should reap a hundredfold reward.

“ Nor was it the will of John Fisher or his intention that she should rest satisfied merely with the distributing of alms for the perishing body, for he persuaded her to erect two noble and goodly Colleges, in Cambridge ; the one she dedicated to our Lord, calling it Christ's College, and which she abundantly endowed, beholding it finished in her own lifetime ; and the other she likewise endowed in the same manner, dedicating it to St. John the Evangelist, but this latter College she did not live to see completed ; but it was finished afterwards by Fisher himself at his own cost.

“ Certain doctors of Oxford at that time in her family, and one in particular of great name and authority, moved Her Highness to leave some such monument of her magnificence in Oxford as she had done in Cambridge. They laid before her a state of the Monastery of Frydes-wyde, and represented to her by way of request the advantage of converting it into a College of students. They showed how practicable such a design might be to a lady of her power and fortune, and that by

this means her fame would be equally and forever celebrated in both Universities. So great address was used on this occasion, that this most pious and excellent Princess showed an intention to gratify their request, which gave them no cause to despair of succeeding in it, till the Bishop of Rochester, who had taken notice of their solicitude and importunity, interceded with Her Highness to the end that he might divert the current of her liberality into another channel. He described in so moving a manner the unhappy condition to which St. John's College, in Cambridge, was reduced by the misconduct of its members, by the alienation of their lands, the necessity they were under of exposing their goods and their very ornaments to sale, and even of intermitting divine offices, but above all, to mention no other instance of their distress, by the heavy load of debt they had contracted, and from which in their present circumstances they had no prospect of being delivered, that the good Princess, deeply affected with sentiments of tenderness and compassion at what he said, was determined, notwithstanding all the powerful applications which were made on the other side, to prefer his advice. He told her—and herein he gave an instance of that prophetic spirit wherewith he was said to be endowed—that no benefit could be placed to greater advantage, than that which should be employed to extirpate barren or noxious weeds out of a neglected stock, towards replenishing it with such seeds as would in time produce a most rich and plentiful harvest; alluding to the progress which would afterwards be made in that celebrated nursery of divine and human learning. And

the event showed that this most pious and venerable father, if in a stricter sense a prophet, did not prophesy falsely.¹

“Also, by his advice, she ordained a divinity lecture in Cambridge and another in Oxford, to be openly read in the schools for the benefit of such as desired to become preachers, and for the maintenance thereof she gave lands to pay the stipends of the reader for ever. What good,” adds our quaint author, “cannot such a man accomplish who holds such keys within his hand, and such a lady at his feet.”

¹ Fiddes's *Life of Wolsey*, p. 296.





CHAPTER II.

JOHN FISHER AS BISHOP.



NCEASING were the acts of charity and benevolence which Fisher performed in his own person, whilst the passage of time exhibited his character in such high perfection, that he was able to win upon the hearts of others to imitate him, for he was so exact in his priestly life, his daily sermons were so eloquent, his performance of all his duties so diligent, that he gained the love and reverence of all. More especially did he win the hearts of his clergy, and of the poor.

Richard Fox, the then Bishop of Winchester was a man high in the esteem of Henry VII., to whose council he belonged, and observing the virtuous life and perfect sanctity of Fisher, on the death of the Bishop of London, Richard FitzJames, Bishop of Rochester, being translated thither, so that the latter bishopric became vacant, he solicited the king that Dr. Fisher should be promoted to it.

But little time was lost ere the king directed his letters to the chapter of the church at Rochester, desiring that they should elect the person he had named, to

which they agreed with not a dissentient voice, and the apostolic see, Julius II. being then pope, confirmed their choice. Thus by this act, in the forty-fifth year of his age, in the year 1504, Fisher beheld himself raised to the episcopal dignity. It was some time ere he could recover from the surprise he felt when his unexpected elevation was announced to him, he had never been raised to any dignity in the church, nor had he ever even in thought desired that such should be conferred upon him, his mind therefore was disturbed and agitated by the suspicion that his advancement was, as it were, purchased by the favour or purse of the Countess of Richmond from the king, whose advice might, he thought, have influenced the chapter of Rochester in electing him as their bishop.

And it was not long before this conjecture of Fisher reached the ears of Henry. "Forsooth," replied he, "indeed the modesty of the man together with my mother's silence speaks in his behalf. I protest she has never so much as opened her mouth to me on the subject; his pure devotion, perfect sanctity, and great learning, which I have myself often observed, and have heard others speak of, are his only advocates."

The truth of the king's words may be gathered out of the very statutes of St. John's College, Cambridge, wherein he afterwards praised the king at whose hands he so freely received the donation.

Now so far was Dr. Fisher from making interest amongst his friends to obtain episcopal advancement, that it was with the utmost difficulty they could persuade on him to accept the office after it was laid

upon his shoulders, a modesty and humility which was borne out in all his subsequent life, for he was twice offered the two rich bishoprics of Lincoln and Ely, and both of them he refused from the hands of Henry VIII. ; and in an espistle dedicated to his friend, Fox, Bishop of Winchester, in which as one not only satisfied, but enjoying the little flock he governed, he writes,

“ Others may have larger pastures, but I have lesser charge of souls, so that when I shall be called to answer for both, I shall be the better able to give an account of them.”

By this we may clearly see, that so far from Fisher making his high office a means by which he might aspire to yet more exalted preferment, he exulted in the knowledge that the smallness of his bishopric enabled him to keep a more watchful eye over the pastors and the people committed to his care.

A poor diocese too was this of Rochester, it was the smallest in the kingdom, and in the time of which we write the income scarcely amounted to £300 a-year.

The Cathedral church of his see had been rebuilt by the pious and accomplished Bishop Gundulph in the year 1080, and some small portion of the old buildings yet remain; the choir is more than 550 years old.

At the south-west corner of the precincts of the Cathedral, Gundulph separated a portion of ground whereon to build a habitation for himself and his successors, whether it was not built substantially, or that the six bishops who followed Gundulph, being translated after a time to better sees caused the repairs to be neglected, is uncertain,

but it appears to have been a cold and uncomfortable dwelling when Fisher took possession of it.¹

Erasmus once wrote to him that his austerities were too great for his health, adding, "your illness arises chiefly from the locality in which you live, the sea is near you, and a muddy shore, and your library is surrounded with glass windows which let in the keen air at every chink, and are very injurious to persons in weak health. I am quite aware what an assiduous attendant you are in your library which is your paradise ; I should have a fit of sickness were I to stay in it three hours. A boarded and wainscoted chamber would be much better—brick and plaster give out a noxious vapour. It is important to the Church, in the penury of good bishops, that you should take care of yourself."

In fact the learned prelate of whom we write was the last who resided here, for after the so-called Reformation not only this house, but those belonging to the see at Halling and Trottescliffe were let for a term of years, and forsaken for the palace of Bromley, as a pleasanter spot for the bishop of the see to live in.

This is by the way, however, for the man with whom we now have to deal approached in sanctity near to the apostolic times, and as he lived in the constant practise of mortification, small thought had he for what others deem the comforts of life, or its conveniencies. He was wont to say that his church was his wife, and that he would never part with her because she was old and poor.

"Indeed he was of such holy life, and strict and austere living as were few in Christendom, whether

¹ Hasted's *History of Kent*. *State Papers*.

religious or otherwise. Of the small revenues of his bishopric he bestowed in deeds of charity all that remained after supplying his own household. He was not sumptuous but mean (careful), according as might well become the reverent honour and degree of a virtuous bishop. He studied many hours daily, and some part of the night, he fasted very much, and prayed and meditated daily divers hours, and much of the night also. He was much given to contemplation, and many years before his death never lay he on feather bed, but on a hard mattress, nor in linen sheets, but only on woollen blankets.

“To scholars he was benign and bountiful, and in alms to the poor very liberal as far as his purse extended, and himself visited his poor neighbours when they were sick, bringing them meat and drink, and many times to him that lacked he brought coverlet and blanket from his own bed, if he could find none other meet for the sick person.

“He had also within him a great stout courage, not dejected in adversity nor elated with prosperity, for he was as one that is utterly disgusted with worldly things.

“Gentle and courteous too was he to all, and very pitiful to them that were in any misery or calamity, and he, like a good shepherd, would not go away from his flock, but continually fed it with preaching of God’s word and example of holy life, doing all he could to reform it both spiritually and temporally, when he perceived any to stray out of the right way, either in life or doctrine.

“Very careful too was he for the bringing up ye youth

of England in virtue and learning, for by his labour and ye favour of ye Countesse of Richmond, with whom he could do very much, he with his good counsel, caused her to build the two famous colleges in the University of Cambridge, in which a great number of studious youth were brought up constantly in virtue and learning till heresy like a flood overwhelmed the whole realm of Englande.”¹

“In person, this holy bishop was somewhat above the ordinary height of man, he was slender, and his form was straight as a dart, his complexion was fair, a healthy colour in his cheek, his hair was brown, and his countenance wore a grave and somewhat sad expression, yet pleasant and cheerful withal, very witty too was he, and from his youth upwards wise, discreet and sober, with so goodly and reverent a gravity, that his demeanour shewed him to be a godly man.”

And truly, if the Bishop of Rochester had ever coveted earthly honours, they were now his own, for they were showered on him with no niggard hand by the seventh Henry. Consequently all those who basked in the sunshine of the monarch's smiles followed his example, whilst, in grateful remembrance of the benefits he had conferred on themselves, the University of Cambridge with one accord chose him for their High Chancellor, and he now stood forth before the world, a spectacle to be admired, for the whole tenor of his life seemed to the entire world as if the church were to him a cloister, his study a cell, from whence he governed with temperance, charity, and prudence, as though his palace by

¹ Norfolk MS., fol. 14.

the continency within its walls were a monastery, and for the learning of its prelate had become a university.

Meanwhile, several years passed over the head of this holy bishop. In the year 1509 the king's death took place. He died on a Sunday, and that day was devoted to two purposes by Fisher—the one to speak words of consolation to the Countess Margaret on her son's death, the other to the preparation and preaching of the funeral sermon.

During eleven years the bishop governed his diocese in this exemplary manner: while the religious revolution occurred in Germany, which ere long penetrated to England, producing momentous and important changes in the religious polity of England, and which ultimately severed the nation from the see of Rome.

About the year 1517, Luther's writings began to be disseminated in the bishop's diocese. The bull of Leo X. respecting Indulgences which had excited the ire of Luther had been fixed in various parts of the University, when in the dead hour of the night above the paper these words were written, *Beatus vir cujus est nomen Domini spes ejus, et non respexit vanitates et insanias falsas (istas)*, Blessed is the man whose trust is in the name of the Lord, and who hath not had regard to (these) vanities and lying follies (Ps. xi.),¹ the writer thinking the word *istas* which he had himself added, would bring the pope and his clergy into disrepute.

On the following morning when the scholars assembling as usual read the sentence, all devout Catholics felt aggrieved at this abuse of the words of Holy Scripture,

¹ *Istas* (these).

whilst those who were lapsing into heresy exulted over the innovation.

The Chancellor at once exerted his utmost influence to find out, by the handwriting, the person who had inserted the obnoxious word; but failing to do so, he called a convention and explained the true meaning of the word *Indulgence*, and then threatened the offender with excommunication.

This attempt to bring the writer before him failing, he called a second convention, and then taking the bull of excommunication in his hand he began to read.

But the words faltered on his tongue, the love he felt for the sinner was shewn by the tears that welled up to his eyes, and no word could he speak.

And so it was that yet a third day was named, for the love of the bishop for all his flock was so great that he would freely have offered up his own life could he by so doing gain one single soul to Christ. But still the Chancellor heard no tidings of the man that had falsified the sacred text, and at length arming himself with a severity in which his heart had no share, he pronounced the sentence unfalteringly from beginning to end, and then overcome with a kind of passionate compassion, he threw the bull of excommunication on the ground, and lifting up his eyes to heaven he burst into tears, thus moving the hearts of the whole assembly.

A short time after it was observed that one of the students became changed in his demeanour, he was utterly abstracted and dispirited, though his companions were quite ignorant of the cause. However, he forsook the university, and attached himself to the domestic

service of one Dr. Goodrick. Some time later, on the same place on which the sentence alluded to above had been written, there now appeared in its place the words, *Delicta juventutis meæ et ignorantias ne memineris Domine*.¹

And to this sentence was attached the name of Peter de Valence.

De Valence was a Norman by birth, and had come to Cambridge in order to study at the university. It was whilst he was a student that, led away by the profane and heretical errors which were seeking to subvert the ancient faith of England, he had written the word *istas*, thus interpolating the sacred text, but now thoroughly repentant, he was absolved from all ecclesiastical censure, and finally became a priest.

In 1518, the Master of Queen's College died, and the fellows at once chose their beloved and venerated bishop to fill the post now vacant; an office which he gladly accepted.

The superintendence of the works of Christ's College, which at this time was not finished, was to the Bishop a labour of love, and he took such delight in it that it might almost be termed his recreation. The Countess of Richmond had endowed it for the maintenance of one master, twelve scholars, fellows, and forty-seven students, for ever, to be trained, as said her will, in learning and virtue.

In the year 1518, Fisher lost his good and amiable patroness, for the Lady Margaret died in the July of that year, previously appointing the Bishop, in whom she

¹ The sins of my youth and my ignorance do not remember.

placed her greatest trust and confidence, one of her executors, uniting him in his office with others, all of whom were persons of high rank.

The Bishop then pronounced an oration over the grave of his lamented mistress, in the Abbey Church of Westminster, reminding his hearers that the deceased lady was daughter of John, Duke of Somerset, and descended from Edward III. ; that she was a second Martha for hospitality, that her virtues and her charitable deeds were proofs of sanctity, and that, though she was a Princess who, by lineage and affinity, was connected with persons of the highest rank, in whose veins royal blood flowed, yet had she stooped to dress the wounds of the poor and lowly with her own queenly hands, performing such offices for love of Him who for us shed His blood on a cross ; adding, as a proof of her humility, that on one occasion when there was an idea of certain Princes waging war against the enemies of Christianity, she had encouraged them by all the means in her power, protesting that if they went she would accompany them in the capacity of laundress, for with her own hands she would wash their linen for them.

St. John's College not being yet built, the other executors named by the Lady Margaret, with mutual consent, resigned into the Bishop's hands the whole disposal of her legacies—a trust which he well deserved—for beyond the endowments already mentioned as bestowed by the Countess of Richmond, he not only bore a portion in the charge of the building, but increased the revenue by a grant of land belonging to himself, whereby four fellowships were founded on his own account, with

an Hebrew lecture and another of Greek, together with eight readers to help the principal ; and then observing a rise in the price of provisions, he gave additional means, so that the commons of the fellows might be increased ; bequeathing also to them his library, then esteemed the best in Europe (after his death), together with his plate, household furniture, and all belonging to him, by a deed of gift made in his lifetime, signing the deed, and putting the college in possession of the same by indentures, only borrowing the same back again to his own use during such time as he should live.

And in order that his hearty good-will and love to this college should be a perpetual remembrance of the thing, he caused a small chapel to be built near the high altar of the great church, in which was placed a tomb of white marble, wherein he intended to have had his bones laid, if God had not willed otherwise to dispose of him. "This martyred bishop's body was not to be brought amongst these men," says the quaint Dr. Hall, from whom we quote, "so they brought *their* bodies to *his* martyrdom ; for Mr. Greenwood, Richard Reynolds (a monk in Sion), and William Exmew (a Carthusian professed in London), came—the former from St. John's College, the two latter from Christ's College—all three suffering death in the reign of Henry VIII. in the cause of his supremacy."

As one endowed almost with a prophetic spirit, Fisher beheld the cloud arise which was to herald a storm, which for more than three hundred years was to bind the church hand and foot beneath the heel of heresy.

The doctrines of Luther had now spread far and

wide ; ecclesiastical authority was scoffed at and reviled ; a new way of salvation was found out ; a nearer, readier, and more easy way to heaven was propounded ; and liberty of conscience was promised to all believers in the reformer's gospel : and then, arming himself for the combat, Bishop Fisher looked about him and began to bestir himself to correct existing abuses.

First, as a wise chancellor, he set all right in the University ; above all, attending to those Colleges in which he had special jurisdiction, providing in the statutes that the studies of the youths in those houses should be so directed that the fourth part of them might become preachers, so that when one had gone forth another should at once succeed him.

And then he hastened to his pastoral charge at Rochester, and setting his own diocese in order, he began to write earnestly, preach diligently, and enable others, in whom his quick discerning eye observed ability and talent, to pursue the same course ; and perceiving that heresy was making rapid strides, he not only besought the King's help, but by his persuasion the former himself wrote his celebrated book against Luther on the seven sacraments.

"That this treatise was Henry's own composition is forcibly asserted by himself ; that it was planned, revised, and improved by the superior judgment of the Cardinal and the Bishop¹ of Rochester was the opinion of the public ; and, finally, though the new denomination experienced some opposition, the request was ultimately granted that the title of Defender of the Faith should be bestowed on

¹ Lingard, Vol. VI., p. 104.

the royal polemic for his defence of the ancient creed, and Leo conferred it by a formal bull on Henry."

Luther, however, wrote a scurrilous reply to the King's book, and the intemperance of his declamations scandalised his friends whilst it rejoiced his enemies. To the King he allotted no other praise than that of writing in elegant language. In every other respect he was a fool and an ass, a blasphemer and a liar.¹

Bishop Fisher then issued his work, "A defence of the King's assertion of the Catholic faith," and this was speedily followed by his "Defence of the holy order of Priesthood against Martin Luther".

In the same year, on Quinquagesima Sunday, 1525, the legate, attended by the other prelates, and the Papal and Imperial ambassadors, proceeded to St. Paul's. The Bishop of Rochester preached from the cross, and the works of Martin Luther, condemned by the Pontiff, were burnt in the presence of the multitude.²

Fisher then obtained leave from the King and from his metropolitan to proceed to Rome, and was about to repair thither when a Synod of the Bishops and of all the clergy was called by Wolsey, in the exercise of his legantine power. The interruption of his long-cherished design the Bishop bore with his usual resignation, in the hope that the Church would benefit; but failing to see the good effected which he had hoped for, he addressed the Synod in the following words:—

"May it not seem displeasing to your eminence and the rest of these grave and reverend fathers of the church, that I speak a few words, which may not be out of season.

¹ Lingard, p. 105.

² Ibid, Vol. VI., p. 163.

“I had thought that when so many learned men as substitutes for the clergy had been drawn into this body, some good matters should have been propounded for the benefit and good of the Church, that the scandals which lie so heavy on her, and the disease which takes hold of these advantages, might have been hereby at once removed and remedied. But who hath made any proposition against the ambition of men whose pride is so offensive, whilst their profession is humility? or against the incontinency of such who have vowed chastity? How are the goods of the Church wasted? the lands, the tithes, and other oblations of the devout ancestors of the people thrown away in superfluous riotous expenses? How can we exhort our flocks to fly the pomps and vanities of this wicked world when we that are Bishops set our minds on nothing more earnestly than that which we forbid? If we should teach according to our doings, how absurdly would our doctrines sound in the ears of those who should listen to us, and if we preach one thing and do another, who believeth our report? which would seem to them no otherwise than as if we should throw down with one hand what we built up with the other. We preach humility, sobriety, and contempt of the world, and the people perceive in the same men who preach this doctrine pride and haughtiness of mind, excess in apparel, and a giving up of ourselves to all worldly pomps and vanities; and what is this other than to set the people at a stand, whether they shall follow the sight of their own eyes or the belief of what they hear?

“Excuse me, reverend fathers, seeing herein I blame

no man more than I do myself; for sundry times, when I have set myself to the care of my flock, to visit my diocese, to govern my church, to answer the enemies of Christ, suddenly there hath come to me a message from the Court that I must attend such a triumph or receive such an ambassador. But what have we to do with the Courts of Princes? If we are in love with Majesty, is there a greater excellence than Him whom we serve? If we are in love with stately buildings, are there higher roofs than our Cathedrals? If with apparel, is there a greater ornament than that of the priesthood? or is there a better company than communion with the saints? Truly, most reverend fathers, what this vanity in temporal things may work in you I know not, but sure I am that in myself I find it a great impediment to devotion. Wherefore I think it necessary and high time that we who are the heads should begin to give example to the inferior clergy as to these particulars, whereby we may all be the better conformable to the image of God; for in this trade of life which we now seek, neither can there be likelihood of perpetuity in the same state and condition wherein we now stand, nor safety to the clergy.”¹

A scathing address was this, and it must have been felt keenly by those of his hearers whose minds were not imbued with his own self-denying and unworldly spirit.

¹ Dr. Hall's *Life of Fisher*.



CHAPTER III.

QUEEN CATHERINE AND ANNE BOLEYN.

FROM youth upwards till now, when in the prime of his manhood, had King Henry revered Fisher as a parent. He had been wont to boast that no Prince in Christendom had a Prelate of virtue so exalted as was the humble and retiring Bishop of Rochester.

To his watchful care the Countess of Richmond when about to die had recommended the youth and inexperience of her royal grandson, and as yet no shadow had crept up to cast a chill over this mutual tender friendship.

But the hour drew nigh in which the Bishop was to be a thorn in the side of a capricious and despotic Prince, who never was known to brook resistance to his will.

The amiable Queen Catherine was older than her husband. She was subject to many infirmities arising from ill health. She had lost all her children save the Princess Mary. She brought the King no male heirs, and he, though as yet it was not publicly known, had transferred his affections to her gay and accomplished maid of honour, Anne Boleyn.

“He gradually abandoned his usual occupations

connected with the government of his realm—his care for which had enlisted for him the love of his subjects—and yielding himself up to the gratification of his passions, he had resigned the care of his state wholly to the Cardinal, whose ready wit, voluble speech, and retentive memory, added to his great learning, well qualified him for the post he held.

“ Besides being Archbishop of York, he held several bishoprics, and as Pope’s legate he had power to convoke the clergy at his pleasure. Moreover, he was not only Cardinal, but was Lord Chancellor of England, so that in a manner he formally ruled all under the King in temporal matters, and won great praise for his absolute indifference as to whether his suitors were rich or poor when administering justice. His fault was that he governed others far better than he governed himself.”¹

It is not our intention to treat with the intricacies of the divorce question otherwise than as connected with the saintly subject of our biography ; for the Bishop of Rochester was the counsel for the injured Catherine, and as such drew upon himself the indignation of the monarch.

It was this question of the divorce which, strenuously resisted from the first by the Bishop, first awakened the resentment of Henry.

Regardless of family engagements, by which the hands of Anne Boleyn and Percy, son of the Earl of Northumberland, were pledged to different persons, they had contracted themselves to each other, thus becoming what was termed troth-plight.

His jealousy excited, the King at once summoned

¹ Dr. Hall’s *Life of Fisher*.

Wolsey to his presence, and to the infinite surprise of the minister bade him dissolve the contract; and flying into one of his fits of ungovernable passion, with an awful oath, he swore "that it was not so, and that if it was, it should not be so"; and having dispatched the Cardinal, he sent for the lady to present herself before him. She speedily complied, before even she had heard of how the King's anger had been excited; and, with a frown on his countenance, the King told his tale, and ended by exclaiming:

"Is it so, Anne? Is it so? What sayest thou to it?" adding, with a terrible oath:

"They say thou hast promised to marry young Percy."

"Sire," exclaimed Anne, assuming an air of bashful modesty, which gave her an additional grace in the eyes of the enamoured monarch, "when I knew no other than that it was lawful in me to make such promises, I must confess I made it; but no good subject makes any promise but with this proviso, that if his sovereign commands otherwise, it shall be lawful in him to obey."

"Well said, my own fair mistress," replied Henry, his countenance full of joy; but at the same time his jealousy had been so piqued, that he dismissed her from the household of the Queen, and sent her to her father's house for a time, to her infinite displeasure, she vowing she would be revenged on the Cardinal, who, though innocent himself, had been the means of separating her from Percy by command of the King.¹

There can be little doubt but that the assertion of Cavendish was correct when he said that the embassy to

¹ Dr. Hall.

France regarding the marriage of the Princess Mary was contrived by the intrigues of Anne to get him out of the way. In fact, during his absence Anne's influence, which had only been under a cloud for a time, wonderfully increased.

"Anne Boleyn lay in continual wait for a convenient occasion of ensnaring him, and the intent of the Lords was no other but to remove him from the King, that by the assistance of their chief mistress they might render him obnoxious to his Majesty, and so in his absence bring him into disgrace, or, at least, into a less degree of authority and esteem at Court."¹

He left England with his mind full of grave misgivings, and he even wrote to the King after he had departed from London, begging him to defend him in his absence against his powerful enemies banded together to conspire his destruction.²

Though the minister was at this time by no means aware that the King intended to raise Anne to the dignity of a throne, yet he had too clear an understanding not to forecast the future, and must have had many vague ideas that the King's present amour would be productive of serious mischief in the end.

The violent passion of the King for Anne, she practised every art to inflame whilst she refused to gratify it, added to which she was in the bloom of youth and possessed all those blandishments by which art and

¹ *Life of Wolsey*, by Cavendish.

² "Assuredly trusting that your Highness of your high virtue and most noble disposition will defend the cause of your most humble servant and subject."—State Papers, p. 493.

a desire to please attract attention ; whilst Catherine had fallen into years, was subject to various infirmities, and in a state of health which allowed her husband small hopes of seeing her become the mother of a son, of which he was so desirous. She had, however, had several children, all of whom, excepting the Princess Mary, had died in their infancy ; and of Mary, any flaw of illegitimacy in her birth had been so little thought of that she had successively been asked in marriage by the chief crowned heads of Europe.

“ The pretence for calling the marriage in question was a prohibition recorded in Leviticus, by which the Jews were forbidden to marry the widow of a deceased brother, and it was urged that this law was equally binding under the Christian and Mosaic dispensation, and, being founded on the nature of things, could not be dispensed with.

“ This objection had been fully considered when the marriage was in debate, and answered in the following manner to the full satisfaction of all parties, that the law in question, even at the time when it was enacted, admitted of exceptions, which were not only authorised but even prescribed by God Himself. That the Law-giver had supposed the case of a man dying without offspring, and not only permitted but commanded his brother to marry the widow on pain of being declared infamous.”

“ In this manner the question concerning Henry’s marriage would have been of no very difficult solution, had the search of truth alone been intended ; but the abettors of a powerful King’s passions so perplexed it

that the heads of men grew giddy in endeavouring to find any meaning of the law but the true, and more efforts were made to invalidate one lawful marriage than had been taken to rectify all the contracts of matrimony since its first institution.”¹

¹ Rev. T. Philip's *Life of Cardinal Pole*, Vol. II., p. 91.





CHAPTER IV.

THE BISHOP AND THE CARDINAL.



AS the Cardinal passed through Kent on his way to France, he visited the amiable but temporising and timorous Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and the brave and saintly Fisher, Bishop of Rochester.

His intention was to disclose to them the King's "secret matter," as it was called, though to those who did not wilfully shut their eyes to the signs of the times and to the King's glaring partiality for Mistress Anne, it was destined before long to be an affair patent to the public at large.

The Archbishop was disposed of without much difficulty, but a stiffer task awaited him at Rochester when the Cardinal sought an interview with its Bishop, the venerable Fisher.

He was now nearing his seventieth year, living isolated from the world, and unlike some of the Bishops of that time, he had dedicated himself to a life of prayer and fasting. Calumny, busy against divers members of the hierarchy, never was known to say a word in disparagement of Fisher.

Could he but be brought to give a favourable opinion of the King's divorce, it would be sure to influence many ; but the Cardinal appears to have approached the subject with the greatest caution, as the following letter testifies, in which Wolsey informs the King of what had occurred since he left Westminster¹ on the previous Wednesday. He says he was everywhere well received by the people of London, and lodged the first night of his journey at Sir John Wiltshire's, and was met by the Archbishop, with whom he communicated on the King's secret matter, what had been done in it, how displeasantly the Queen took it, and what the King had done to pacify her, declaring that hitherto nothing had been intended by him except to discover the truth, on occasion moved by the Bishop of Tarbes. He watched his countenance, and observed his astonishment as to how the Queen should have come to the knowledge of it. "I think," adds he, "that he is not much turned from his first fashion, as he asserts that, however unpleasant it may be to the Queen, truth and the law must prevail. I have instructed him," he continues, "how he is to act if the Queen should ask his counsel, and he has promised to comply. I spoke to him of the present calamities of the Church, the captivity of the Pope, and your resolution for redress of the same, for which purpose I was sent to France.

"I proceeded next to Rochester, where I arrived on Thursday, and was received by Sir Edward and Sir Henry Gildeford, and entertained by the Bishop, to whom I talked of the lamentable state of the Church, and the prayers and fastings ordered by you for redress

¹ State Papers, 3231, Vol. IV., Part 2.

of the same. . On my asking whether any one had been sent to him by the Queen, he paused awhile, and then said that he had received a message from the Queen by word of mouth, without any particulars, stating that certain matters had passed between her and you, in which she desired his counsel ; and that he had replied that in such matters he would do nothing without the King's commandment.

“On my asking him to be plain and frank with me, and tell me if he had formed any conjecture what the matter could be, he answered that he knew nothing certain, but conjectured it was for a divorce, and he was induced so to think by a tale brought by his brother from London, who had heard in certain company things sounded to such a purpose. This is all he says. I then told him that the King had never intended to disclose this matter, except to very few. Yet, now seeing that his good intentions had been misrepresented, I had special commission to inform him of it, taking from him an oath of secrecy.

“I then told him the whole matter of the proposed marriage between Francis and the Princess Mary, the objections made to it by the Bishop of Tarbes, and the investigation to which it had given rise as to the dispensing powers of the Pope, &c., for which I was sent into France ; thus declaring the whole matter to *him as was devised with your Highness at York Place*. I added that some inkling of the matter had come to the Queen's knowledge, who, casting further doubts than was intended, ‘had broken with your Grace thereof, after a very displeasing manner, saying that by my procurement

and setting forth, a divorce was intended between her and your Highness,' and your anxiety to discover who was her informant. The Bishop greatly blamed the conduct of the Queen, and thought if he might speak with her he might bring her to submission. I have, however, so persuaded him that he shall not speak or do anything in this matter, except according to your pleasure. After this I had some conversation with him, urging the impediments of the marriage, in which he mainly agreed."

The¹ Cardinal was, it thus appears, endeavouring to cheat himself into the fond belief that he should get the better of the Bishop of Rochester, and win him over to the King's cause ; but the following letter, if such was the case, must have opened his eyes to the impracticability of the task he had in hand when he visited him on his way to France. Writes the venerable Bishop :

"On² consulting those dumb masters, such authorities as I have at hand, I find they differ greatly amongst themselves, some declaring that the King is prohibited by divine law, others that it is lawful. On mature consideration I think I see an easy answer to the arguments of those who deny its lawfulness, but not to those of the other side. I cannot see any sound reason to shew that it is prohibited by divine law for a brother to marry the wife of a brother who has died without children ; and, considering the fulness of authority given by our Lord to the Pope, who can deny that the latter may give a dispensation to that effect for any serious cause? But, even admitting the arguments to be

¹ Fiddes' Coll., p. 185.

² State Papers, 3143.

balanced on either side, I should be decided by this, that it belongs to the Pope to clear ambiguous places of Scripture, after hearing the opinions of the best divines ; otherwise it is in vain that Christ hath said, *Quidquid solverei in terra, erit solutum in cælis*, &c. As the Pope therefore has more than once by his act declared that it is lawful to dispense in this case, this alone, I think, should settle the question. I have accordingly no hesitation in declaring that the dispensation is within the Pope's power.

“ HALLING,
“ Add R. D. Legato.”

The following letter is also to the same effect :—

“ Bishop to Paul ———.

“ Paul has said he has heard two things at which he marvels not a little—first, that Wakefield has found something in Hebrew which makes for the King's argument ; secondly, that the Bishops, who at first dissented, have all come over to the King's opinion, which, if true, he thinks a great disgrace. I thank you,” writes Fisher, “ for this candid expression of opinion. The matter concerns not only the honour but the soul's health of the writer, if he were to recant what he once said truly. I trust he will never depart from the truth, though open to conviction. I have leisurely taken great pains in this matter to know what the truth is, and have no doubt of my conclusion, and give my reasons for holding, in opposition to Wakefield, that marriage with a deceased brother's wife was not prohibited by the Mosaic Law ; and believe the King means to do nothing against the law of God, but he will be quite justified in

submitting his difficulty to the Pope; especially as Kings, from the fulness of their power, are apt to think that *right* which suits their pleasure. But it is *not* true that all Bishops think such a marriage invalid."





CHAPTER V.

AN UNWELCOME ADVISER.



AFTER the Cardinal had returned from France, a meeting was convoked by him at York Place of the most able divines and counsellors, amongst whom was the Bishop of Rochester.

The question of the divorce was plainly laid before them, and Wolsey, in order to prove the nullity of the marriage, like an able courtier, employed no other arguments, than those which the King had established in the treatise he had written on the subject.

The learned Sir Thomas More was then pressed to give his opinion on the subject, but he waived the dangerous matter, alleging, in excuse, his ignorance of theology; and Bishop Fisher, after having answered all arguments, for, and against the divorce, to the satisfaction of most of his brother prelates, concluded by saying: "I consider there is no question at all of any divorce to be made, seeing the marriage between the King and Queen was good and lawful from the beginning, and it is necessary to remove this scruple from the King's mind as soon as possible".

When Wolsey communicated to the King the account of the conference he had held, and the objections Fisher had raised to the proposed divorce, one idea took possession of his mind, and this was, how he should best win over the Bishop to his purpose; and he eagerly embraced the advice of the Cardinal, to speak to him concerning his design, with all possible gentleness and forbearance. So at once sending for his whilom preceptor, he received him in the long gallery, and after walking awhile with him, he lavished on him words of praise for his great virtue and learning, and then, in presence of the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, he exclaimed, with reference to his state of mind respecting his divorce:—

“My conscience, my Lord, is sore tormented. I have consulted with my ghostly father and several other wise and learned men, but am by no means satisfied. And so, relying on the special confidence I have in your great learning, I have made choice of you, desirous to give your advice the preference over others. Declare your opinion freely, my Lord, so that my conscience may be fully instructed, and I no longer left in suspense.”

At these words the Bishop fell on his knees, and was about in that humble posture to open his mind to the King; but the latter immediately raised him with both hands, and blamed him for kneeling down. Upon which the good Bishop calmly and fearlessly said—

“I do beseech your grace to be of good cheer, and not to disquiet yourself one whit concerning this matter, nor be dismayed or troubled at this business. There is no heed to be taken of men who account themselves so wise

and arrogate to themselves more knowledge and learning in divinity than had all the learned fathers of the Church, and the divines of Spain and England that were in your father's time, together with the Apostolic See, by whose authority this marriage was approved, confirmed, and dispensed with, as good and lawful. Truly, you ought rather to make it a matter of conscience that you entertain any such scruple in so clear and weighty a matter by bringing it in question, than to have the least scruple concerning its validity, and my advice is that your Majesty quickly lay aside such thoughts, and for any peril that may happen to your soul thereby, let the guilt rest on mine. This is all that the most loyal of subjects can say, and whether I have spoken well or not, I shall not refuse to answer any man in your behalf, whether publicly or privately, and I do not doubt but that there are many worthy and learned men in your kingdom who hold the same opinion; as on the contrary (if they be permitted to speak with freedom) who hold it as a very dangerous and unseemly matter that such a thing as a divorce should be even spoken of, to which side I rather advise your Majesty to have recourse than to the other."¹

And the King knit his brows, and spoke never a word, for his soul was full of thoughts of Anne Boleyn, and his ears longed to hear the words which should enable him to divorce his Queen and put Mistress Anne in her place. So he turned suddenly away, and from that day forward he never looked favourably on the Bishop of Rochester.

As to the unfortunate, tormented Queen, it pleased the Almighty to visit her both in mind and body. Her

¹ Dr. Hall.

beauty had faded before its time. She was a prey to chronic maladies, which frequently rendered her nights sleepless. All her children were in heaven, with the exception of her daughter Mary. Vainly had she besought God to send her a son—the object of the King's desires. He heard her not, and the pious mother became resigned. She was aware that her faithless spouse lavished on another the caresses of which she had been so proud, and no murmur escaped her lips. The pomp of royalty was not intended for her. Seated by a small table, with Mary at her feet, her maids of honour around her, she loved to make tapestry, to sew, to ply the spindle. Always calm, affable, and obliging, she was a good mother, a tender wife, an admirable Christian, and was endowed with every virtue that can adorn the character of woman.

It is an old adage, that "walls have ears," and she learned, even in her close retirement, that she was betrayed by her young maid of honour, whom she had loved as her own child, and that Henry's desire was to banish herself, to put forth her daughter Mary as the fruit of a sacrilegious union, and place the crown on the brow of his mistress. Maternal love then transformed the meek Catherine into an heroic woman, and at the foot of the crucifix she made a resolve to defend unto death, if need be, all her sacred rights of mother, wife, and Queen; and in the path she traced out herself to follow, we shall not see her for a moment fail. She is the valiant woman of the Scriptures, who drew her courage from the contemplation of heavenly things.

"Her just anger fell on the gay beauty, who, not

content with stealing the heart of her husband, sought to sell herself for the price of a diadem. Henry was present at 'this short tragedie,' which he cut still shorter by swearing that if he had consulted theologians (for Catherine now knew all), it was to still the cries of his conscience. To this hypocritical protestation the Queen replied that she had come to him a virgin; that it was an offence against God to demand of theologians, if during eighteen years the mother of his child had lived in sin; and concluded by adding that the King doubtless would not refuse her what he granted to the least of her subjects, both English and foreign advocates, in order to defend her threatened rights."¹

Henceforth every movement of Catherine was watched. She was overlooked in her royal habitation like the condemned prisoner in his cell, and her maids of honour and her servants were commanded to watch and reveal all the actions of their mistress.

The King had taken an early opportunity, after Wolsey's return from France, of confiding to him his desire of making Anne Boleyn his wife, and thunder-struck at this disclosure, the minister threw himself at the feet of his royal master, and remained in that position more than an hour reasoning with him on the infatuation of his conduct, but without avail.²

¹Audin's *Histoire de Henry VIII.*, p. 351.

²Agnes Strickland, Vol. II., p. 196.



CHAPTER VI.

THE DIVORCE.

MEANWHILE, the agents of Henry, Dr. Fox, and Dr. Stephen Gardiner, were sent from England to entreat, if possible, from the Roman Pontiff his signature to two instruments. One was a dispensation of the same import with one previously sent, but in more ample form. The second was called a decretal bull, in which the Pope was made to pronounce in favour of the prohibition in Leviticus, and declare that it was part of the divine law, and admitted of no exception or dispensation.¹

The Pope had been led to believe that the suit of Henry proceeded from sincere scruples, and at once signed the dispensation, but demurred to the decretal bull, and a congregation of theologians was assembled, and it was agreed that to issue such a bull would be to determine a point of doctrine which had hitherto been freely discussed, and to condemn both the permission in Deuteronomy and the conduct of Julius II. Gardiner at length abandoned his point, but he adduced so many

¹ Lingard, Vol. IV., p. 134.

objections against the allegations in which the original dispensation had been granted, urged with so much success the services of Henry to the Holy See, and so discreetly interwove threats with his entreaties, that a second congregation was called, in which it was resolved that a commission might issue to examine into the validity of the dispensation, and in the most ample forms which the papal council would admit ; authorising Wolsey, with the aid of any one of the English prelates, to inquire, without judicial forms, into the validity of the dispensation granted by Julius, to pronounce, in defiance of appeal, the dispensation sufficient or surreptitious, the marriage valid or invalid, according to the conviction of his conscience, to divorce the parties if invalid, but to legitimate their issue if desired.¹

Wolsey received the tidings with alarm, for Anne Boleyn was not his friend, and her friends were his enemies ; but could he but induce the Pope to sign the decretal bull, it would raise him to his former place in the King's estimation, whilst, at the same time, Clement was daily harassed by the arguments and intreaties of Gardiner and his colleagues, whom to pacify he promised never to revoke the cause nor reverse the judgment of the legates, and at last reluctantly signed the decretal commission. The papal ministry were not, however, deceived by the pretences of Wolsey. They were aware if he had possession of the bull, he would not hesitate to publish it in his own defence, and, to defeat his purpose, they intrusted it to the care of the legate Campeggio, with strict orders not to suffer it out of his hands, but to

¹Lingard, Vol. VI., p. 136.

read it to the King and the Cardinal, and then commit it privately to the flames. Under a different combination of circumstances, indeed, the passions of a tyrant would never have been so disastrous. The resistance of S. Anselm quelled the despotism of the first Norman princes. The blood of S. Thomas raised so indignant a cry throughout Europe that Henry II. paused, and was ever afterwards timid in his encroachments. Had the two archbishops been men of this stamp, Henry VIII. himself might have been baffled; but neither of them was found bold enough to speak, or, at all events, to act decidedly in favour of the oppressed Catherine. If they could throw the odium of defending her upon the Pope, they were satisfied. The bishops were now, alas, save one, men of the world, who knew the wiles of statesmanship, who were learned in languages, in history, in law, in the art of governing—who, in short, were ornaments to the King and his court, but were, for the most part, strangers to the independence of Christian pastors. The King, whose very instincts were despotic, must have been gratified indeed as he looked round his magnificent court. The highest of the land were there, and all obsequious. The spirit of the old baronage was departed—there was not one to assume the tone, honest though rough, of a man who bore himself as a freeman, and almost as an equal, and dared to criticise and sometimes to resist. But to find even the prelates of the same pliant disposition, *this* must have been the crown of such a ruler's joy.¹

With the nation at large the royal cause was most

¹ Canon Flanagan's *History of the Church in England*, Vol. II., p. xix.

unpopular, and insurrections and tumults were raised in many parts of the kingdom—the women, especially amongst the poorer classes, espousing the side of the Queen; for she possessed every virtue that could adorn a throne.

The Emperor had resolved to support the honour of his aunt, and grave fears existed in the minds of men that the divorce would lead to the interruption of those advantages and communications, which had subsisted for centuries, between this island and the Emperor's subjects in the Netherlands.¹

“Wolsey, in resisting the King's design, fulfilled the duty of a faithful servant, as a marriage with Anne Boleyn seemed to him both shameful and fatal—shameful, because at Paris he had heard certain details related connected with the life of the young lady, and fatal, because it would lead to a rupture between the Emperor, the nephew of Catherine, and the King of England, and it must be confessed that Wolsey would have been able to efface from the book of his life more than one sad page, if, when he rose from the feet of the King, he had hastened to seek the great seal, and return it to the prince who had refused to listen to his advice.”²

“But, as soon as he retired from the King, he meditated on the means of atoning for the courageous resistance he had dared to offer to the monarch, and again he sacrificed his conscience to a morsel of parchment which confided to him the seal of the State. But it was not without a struggle.”³

¹ Lingard, Vol. VI., p. 127.

² Cavendish, Vol. I., p. 139.

³ Audin, Vol. I., p. 389.

Before the arrival of the legate Campeggio, who brought with him the decretal bull, and was joined in the commission with Wolsey, the King, from motives of decency, had removed his mistress from the precincts of the court.

The Queen was without reproach, and she remained perfectly calm.

On the 22nd October, 1528, Campeggio had his first audience with the King, and his conversation was mixed with praise of the prince who had shown himself the faithful ally of the Holy See, and of the Pope, who was well disposed to do for Henry all that a good father could do for the best of sons.

The allusion was clearly understood by all the courtiers, but Henry wanted positive engagements. Henceforth the King scarcely ever quitted the company of the legate. He visited him morning and evening, caressed and cajoled him, trying to draw him out to open his mind unreservedly to him, but the legate was wont to retire within himself, and suddenly became absorbed in the mysterious depths of diplomatic silence, where it was his will to remain as impenetrable and as impassible as his mouth was discreet, and Henry returned to his old system of corruption which had been so serviceable to him on previous occasions.

Before entering into holy orders, Campeggio had been a married man, and, arriving in England, he brought with him his second son, Rodolfo, whom Burnet has chosen to represent as illegitimate, ignorant apparently that the Cardinal was a widower and the father of five

children.¹ On this Rodolfo, then, the King conferred the order of knighthood, but the father, sensible of the cause of royal politeness, preserved the same impassibility. Then he was tried to be tempted by the bait of the rich bishopric of Durham, which yielded £20,000 a year, but Campeggio refused the bishopric, of which the revenues, whilst the see was vacant, were abandoned to the King's mistress, and she enjoyed them during one year, when, on the presentation of Anne, Tunstall took possession of the episcopal see.²

Faithful to his promise, the legate exhorted the King, on behalf of the Pope, to abandon his fatal design, and, in order to soften him, he represented the injury the divorce would do to his reputation, the wrath of Charles V., the despair of his daughter, the death probably of her mother; but Henry remained inflexible.

On the 27th October, the two legates, accompanied by four other prelates, paid their final visit to the Queen, who, not having been forewarned, received them with visible emotion, and Campeggio, after having saluted her in the name of the sovereign pontiff, conjured her to consent to abandon a spouse whose affection she no longer possessed, to sacrifice her peace to the peace of Christianity, and by an act of heroism, of which the

¹ Campeggio brought with him to England one of his illegitimate sons.—Burnet's *History of the Reformation*.

² Fiddes's *Life of Wolsey*.

³ It is a curious but a positive fact that the profits and revenues of that episcopal palatinate were actually given up for one year to Anne Boleyn, when she was content to give up the episcopal throne for the prospect of a more brilliant one, and Tunstall took full possession.—Howard's *Life of Wolsey*, Vol. I., p. 437.

world would take note in this life, and God in the next, to avert a schism which her resistance would inevitably cause in England. The Queen knew under what fatal auspices her first marriage had been contracted, for it had been rumoured the execution of the unfortunate Earl of Warwick (who had been imprisoned from his childhood, for no other crime than his birth) was due to her father, the King of Spain, having refused to bestow Catherine on the Prince of Wales as long as so near a claimant of the house of York was alive. Catherine herself had been told of the report, and in the following reign was heard to observe that she could never expect much happiness from her union with the family of Tudor, if that union had been purchased at the price of royal and innocent blood.¹

Campeggio ended his discourse by exhorting her to enter a convent, an idea which the Pope had been informed she had entertained.

But Catherine was a mother as well as a queen, and she exclaimed—

“My lords, is it to be a question whether my marriage with the King be lawful, when for more than twenty years we have been married? Prelates and lords, and privy-councillors of the King are yet alive, who deemed our nuptials pure and holy. And would ye now pronounce it as abominable in God’s sight? Truly, this is a marvel, when I remember the love of my wise father Ferdinand for me, and how he obtained a dispensation from the court of Rome, that I, having been one brother’s wife, might without scruple marry the other

¹ Lingard’s *History*, Vol. V., p. 322.

brother lawfully. As my first marriage was not completed, my second must needs be good and lawful."

Then, turning towards Wolsey, she exclaimed—

"My lord, Cardinal of York, I accuse you as the cause of all my sufferings ; my candour has doubtless offended you. I have said what I thought of your arrogance and ambition, and you have revenged yourself on me and my nephew. You have kept him true promise. He has you to thank for all his wars and vexations."

And, without permitting Wolsey to justify himself, she at once withdrew from the chamber.





CHAPTER VII.

BRAVE AND INFLEXIBLE.



IN the month of May, 1529, the court opened, writes Stowe, in which the King's majesty was to appear as a suppliant. In the monastery of Black Friars, a vast amphitheatre had been prepared, in the midst of which two thrones for the King and Queen had been erected.

On the Queen presenting herself before the assembly, she protested against her judges, and withdrew, after having appealed to the court of Rome.

On returning to her palace, Catherine found much to distress her. Lying agents, paid by the King, had spread false reports amongst the people, injurious to her honour, declaring that she secretly conspired against the life of the King and the Cardinal; that she yielded herself up to a scandalous gaiety; welcomed all who approached her, in order to gain them to her cause; and ruined the prince in the affections of his people.

On the 28th, the court re-assembled, the apparitor calling out in Latin, "Henrice, Anglorum rex, adesto in curiâ". Henry, King of England, come into Court.

"Here," replied the King, rising from his throne.

"Catherine, Queen of England, come into Court."

But the Queen replied not, but, rising, walked hastily across the court, and threw herself at the feet of the King, and, clasping her hands, burst forth into a passionate appeal, and besought him to render her justice.

Then she arose in tears, and bending respectfully to the King, hastened from the court.

"Her pathetic address, delivered with humility, and yet with the spirit becoming an innocent woman, made," says Tytler, "a deep impression."

It was impossible for her ruthless husband to destroy the effect her impassioned appeal for justice had made on the assembly, and as soon as she had departed, the King arose and addressed the court in the following words—

"As the Queen is now gone, I will declare in her absence that she hath always been to me as true, obedient, and conformable a wife as I could wish, or any man desire, for she hath all the virtuous qualities that ought to adorn a woman of her high dignity. She is of high birth, yet so meek a spirit—as if her humility had not been acquainted with it—so that if I sought all Europe over, I should never find a better wife. Therefore, I should willingly, if it were lawful, continue her to be my wife till death separate us, ye may easily guess. But conscience—conscience is *such* a thing. Who can endure the sting and prick of conscience always gnawing at his breast. Wherefore, my lords, this woman—this *good* woman, I say—sometime being my brother's wife, as ye all know, hath bred such a scruple within me, that

my mind is sore tormented, for, I fear, I am in great danger of God's wrath, and the rather so, because He has denied me a son—save such as died incontinently after they were born. And my conscience is so disturbed—and almost in despair of having sons by her—that, I think, it behoveth me to look further, and consider the welfare of this realm, and the danger it stands in of lacking a prince to succeed me. Therefore, I think good, for both these reasons, to attempt the law herein, and know by your good learned counsel whether I may lawfully take another wife, by whom God may send me male offspring, in case my first marriage should appear unwarrantable, this is my only excuse, not for any dislike to the Queen's person or age, with whom I could be as well contented to live—if our marriage may stand with the laws of God—as with any woman living. In this consists my doubt, in which I seek to be satisfied by the sound learning, wisdom, and judgment of you, my lords, the prelates of this realm, now assembled, and to your judgment I entrust myself with all obedience. Shortly after this scruple entered my head, I moved it to you, my lord of Lincoln, and as you, my lord, were in doubt, you advised me to ask counsel of others, whereupon I asked you, my lord of Canterbury, to put this matter forward, the more desirous to have it granted as I have your seals to shew for license of inquiry, signed by all the bishops."

"May it please your Grace," said the Archbishop, rising, "I doubt not but that my brethren will acknowledge the same." For he had induced several of the bishops to sign their names, and, of his own accord, had

signed those of others, not imagining they would have the boldness to charge him with falsehood.

The undaunted spirit of Fisher, however, was one not likely to quail before either King or prelate. Moreover, he was one of Catherine's counsel. His own conscience was spotless throughout the whole of this wretched business, and, in a clear, calm voice, said Fisher—

“Under your favour, my lord, it is not so; all the bishops are not so far agreed, for to that instrument you have neither my hand nor seal.”

“How so,” exclaimed Henry, an ominous frown gathering on his brow; “look here, my lord. Mean you to say that is not your hand-writing and seal?” continued the King, extending the document as he spoke.

“No, forsooth, your Grace,” replied Fisher; “it is none of my hand or seal.”

With a deepening frown on his brow, turned Henry to the Archbishop, exclaiming—

“How say you to that assertion, my lord of Canterbury?”

“Sire, it *is* his hand and seal,” was the reply.

There was no mark of intimidation, no appearance of fear or hesitation in the demeanour of brave John Fisher, as, with the eyes of all the assembled court turned upon him, and those of Henry fixed angrily and enquiringly on his face, he replied, in a firm voice—

“No, my lord. Often have you besought me to sign that document, as you have besought others of the bishops, but I have always plainly told both you and them that I could in no wise consent to such an act, for

it is sorely against my conscience for such a business to be called in question. Therefore, never shall my hand and seal be affixed to such an instrument, God willing. Aye, and moreover, much more than that did I say, that was to the same purpose, if you will call my words to mind."

"It is very true," replied the Archbishop. "I do not deny that such words passed between us, but, in the end, you were well contented I should subscribe your name, and put your seal to it, saying you would allow it as if it was your own act and deed."

For a moment, annoyed at this monstrous accusation, the Bishop paused, surprise and indignation alike keeping him silent under the injustice of the accusation, but in a moment he recovered himself.

"No, my lord ; I repeat it is *not* so. By your favour and license, that would have been one and the same thing. I repeat what you are charging me with in this matter is most untrue and——"

Here, however, further speech on the Bishop's part was cut short, for the King himself interrupted him, saying—

"Well, well, my lord of Rochester, it is no great matter, we will not dispute the point with you—you are but one amongst many, if the worst should come to pass."¹

Others had been dealt with in the same fashion as Fisher, but they lacked his brave intrepidity of spirit, so said they not a word.

Some three or four sittings had been held, when, from

¹ Dr. Hall.

a letter written by Campeggio, we find the Bishop of Rochester had expressed himself in the following manner—

“CAMPEGGIO TO SALVIATI.

“Yesterday, the fifth audience was given. While the proceedings were going on as usual, owing to the Queen's contumacy, the Bishop of Rochester made his appearance, and said, in an appropriate speech, that in a former audience, he had heard the King's majesty discuss the cause, and testify before all that his only intention was to get justice done, and to relieve himself of the scruple which he had in his conscience, inviting both the judges and everyone else to throw some light on the investigation of the cause, because on this account he found his mind much distressed and perplexed.¹ On this offer and command of the King, he (the bishop) judged it meet to come forward in public and manifest what he had discovered after two years' most diligent study, both in order not to procure the damnation of his soul, and not to be unfaithful to the King, or to fail in doing the duty which he owed to the truth, in a matter of such great importance, he presented himself before their reverend lordships to declare, affirm, and, with forcible reasons, demonstrate to them that this marriage of the King and Queen can be dissolved by no power, human or divine, and for this opinion, he declared he would even lay down his life.² He added, 'the Baptist in olden times regarded it as impossible for him to die

¹ *State Papers*, 5782.

² Vide *State Papers*, “The sentence here takes another turn.”

more gloriously than in the cause of marriage. And that as it was not so holy at that time as it has now become by the shedding of Christ's blood, he could not encourage myself more ardently, more effectually, and with greater confidence to dare any great or extreme peril whatsoever.' He said many more suitable words, and at the end presented a book written by himself on this subject.

"After him the Bishop of S. Asaph (Standish) spoke, and he was nearly of the same opinion. Then followed a doctor called the Dean of the Arches (prefectus) of the court of Canterbury.

"The Cardinal of York replied to all of them, that, in the first place, he was surprised that they had attacked them (the legates) without warning. Next, that they sat there to hear all things connected with the divorce, and to do, for sake of justice, whatever divine wisdom inspired them to do.

"The proceedings then continued. On account of her non-appearance, the Queen was accounted contumacious, but she was cited to appear once for all. . . . The affair of Rochester was unexpected and unforeseen, and consequently has kept everybody in wonder. What he will do, we shall see when the day comes (*alla giornata*). You already know what sort of a man he is, and may imagine what is likely to happen.

"LONDON, 29th June, 1529."

The above letter is followed by one from Campeggio's secretary, alluding to the bishop's oration before the cardinals and the people, adding—"The bishop is held

here in great esteem, on account of his virtuous and pious life. . . . The event has caused much discussion."

On the next meeting, the King's counsel brought forward divers proofs respecting the invalidity of the King's marriage; the witnesses, who were some twenty-seven in number, being examined. They were mustered chiefly out of the sycophants and creatures of the King and of Mistress Anne and her family. Their evidence regarded the age of Prince Arthur and the Lady Catherine at the time of marriage, its consummation, and Henry's protest, in his father's lifetime, against his alliance with the Queen. The nullity of the papal dispensation was then insisted on, and whilst every heart beat high in expectation of the sentence, to which they had persuaded themselves the judges would proceed, Campeggio, to the indignation of the King and his councillors, prorogued the court until the month of October.

Previously, however, to this adjournment, which heralded the speedy departure of the Italian legate to Italy, and after the hearing of the witnesses, the venerable Fisher arose and addressed the assembly in the following words—

"All that ye have been listening to, my lords, amounteth to no more in substance than that which hath been heretofore examined, debated upon, and looked into by the most learned of divines and lawyers. I remember it all perfectly well. The manner in which they proceeded, and that what was then alleged, put in contrast to what was produced on the other side, was esteemed most vain and foolish, on which the marriage

was decided upon, approved and ratified by the apostolic see, and that so fully, that I think it very hard again to call it in question before another judge."

Then stood up Master Ridley, another of the Queen's counsel. He was short of stature, but well learned and spirited in manner.

"My lords, the cardinals," said he, "we have heard the Queen herself, in the face of the whole court, and in the presence of the King, call the great God of heaven and earth to witness that she came a pure virgin to the King, her husband, and how she put it to his conscience, an' she said not the truth, and the King gainsaid not her words. Let us not then lay aside reverence to former power and authority—even that of the apostolic see itself—so that all that has been determined or approved and sanctioned become void by this matter being called in question. In my mind it would be most detestable, and a scandal to this honourable court to hear such stuff ripped up in contempt of former power. And it is calling the wisdom of our ancestors and predecessors into question and derision, as well as our own."¹

Then arose Nicholas, Bishop of Ely, who averred his belief in the solemn assertion of the Queen respecting her marriage.

Feeling confident that his cause before the two legates would not prosper, Henry clung to the hope of alarming Catherine as to the ultimate issue of the suit, to engage her to abandon herself to his own generosity, so as to prevent further appeal to the Pope.

Wolsey had but just retired to rest after a day of

¹ Dr. Hall's *Life of Bishop Fisher*.

extreme anxiety, when Lord Wiltshire, the father of Anne Boleyn, besought him, on behalf of the King, to repair immediately to the palace of the Bridewell, and to tempt the Queen by every means in his power to cast herself on the affection of the King, and to end by this act of condescension a course which would otherwise redound only to her own dishonour. Wolsey, however, did not conceal from him that there was but small hope to be expected in pursuing such a step, adding, that he and other lords of the council had put fancies into the head of the King, whereby they would give much trouble to the realm, and, at the least, would have but small thanks either from God or from the world.¹ He rose, took his barge, and went to Campeggio, and from that prelate's residence the two legates proceeded to Bridewell. It was early in the morning. The Queen was working with her ladies, and approached them with a skein of silk round her neck.

"Pardon me, my lords," said she, "for keeping you waiting. What would you with me?"

"To converse with your Grace in your oratory, if it please you," replied Wolsey.

"My lord," replied the Queen, "say here whatever you wish—I have no fear."

"*Reverendissima Majestas*," replied the Cardinal.

"Speak in English," replied the Queen; "though I do know a little Latin."

"Madam," said Wolsey, "we have come with a message from his Majesty entirely in the interests of your Highness, to whom we are devoted."

¹ Howard's *Life of Wolsey*, Vol. I., p. 443.

"I thank you, my lords," said Catherine: "I was at work with my maids, whom you behold. My counsellors are not very clever, nor am I myself. I, a poor woman, know not how to answer persons of wisdom as ye be, but, since you desire it, we will pass to my oratory."

What passed in that interview, no one ever knew. But at the end of the conference, which lasted a long time, the countenance of the Queen showed traces of deep grief and abundant tears, and on those of the two legates signs of profound emotion. And it was rumoured that she had declared that as Queen of England, mother of Mary, and aunt of Charles V., she should carry her appeal to the feet of the sovereign pontiff.

On the 23rd July, the legates held their last sitting. In an adjoining apartment, the King watched the progress of his case, his counsel demanding in insolent language that the court should give its final judgment, to which Campeggio, in a beautiful speech, replied that he was too old and feeble to fear threats, and that he hoped to appear before the tribunal of the Almighty with a clear conscience—the case must be referred to the sovereign pontiff.

Then it was that the Duke of Suffolk, striking his hand heavily on the table, exclaimed—

"The old proverb is true, 'Never yet did Cardinal bring good to England'."

It was a terrible insult, and Wolsey, starting up, looking him in the face, exclaimed—

"My lord, I have the honour to be a member of the sacred college, and, Duke though you may be, you owe

to me that you have a head on your shoulders, therefore pacify yourself, my lord, and speak like a man of honour and wisdom, or else hold your peace."

As soon as the trial was at an end, Henry resolved to wreak his vengeance on all that had opposed him. Campeggio was insulted by his luggage being searched ; but the judge was incorruptible. And it has been thought that it was Henry's love-letters to Anne, then safe in the Vatican, or else the decretal bull, which Campeggio had destroyed, as the Pope had enjoined, which was the main object of the search.

All the court then flocked to the levees of the mistress, and the persecuted wife was ordered to quit Windsor.





CHAPTER VIII.

THE BISHOP IN PARLIAMENT.



IN 1529, writes Dr. Hall, a Parliament was called to regulate what was termed abuses of the clergy, a rumour having prevailed for some time that a blow was meditated on the wealth of the Church.¹ In the House of Lords the bishops and abbots offered a vigorous opposition, three bills respecting the mortuaries, probate of wills, and plurality of benefices having passed the lower House.

Then it was that the venerable Fisher, who never lacked the courage to speak when he saw it would be sin to hold his peace, arose, and, in the following words, told the projectors of these bills that they sought, not the good of religion, but robbery and sacrilege—

“My lords,” exclaimed Fisher, “here are certain bills brought forth against the clergy, in which complaints are made of the viciousness, indolence, rapacity, and cruelty of bishops, abbots, priests, and their officials; but, my lords, are *all* to be condemned as idle, ravenous, and cruel; and for such as are, are there not laws already provided? Is there a single abuse we do not

¹ Hall's *Life of Fisher*.

seek to rectify? or, can we correct to such an extent as that there shall be *no* abuses. Are not the abuses of the clergy to be corrected by the clergy? or, shall men find fault with the sins of other men, whilst they forget their own, and punish where they have no authority to correct? If we do not execute our own laws, let each suffer for his neglect; or, if we lack the power, aid us with your help, and we shall thank you. But I hear that there is a motion made, my lords, that the small monasteries shall be taken into the King's hands, which makes me fear that it is not so much the *good* as the *goods* of the Church which are looked after. Truly, my lords, how this may sound in your ears, I cannot tell, but to me it appears as if our holy mother the Church were to become a bondmaiden brought into servility and thralldom, and by degrees to be banished from those places which the piety and liberality of our forefathers have conferred upon her. Otherwise, to what tendeth these portentous and curious petitions of the Commons? To no other intent and purpose than to bring the clergy into contempt with the laity that they may seize their patrimony. But, my lords, beware of yourselves and your country; beware of your mother, the Catholic Church. The people are subject to novelties, and Lutheranism spreads itself amongst us. Remember Germany and Bohemia—what miseries are befalling them already—and let our neighbour's sorrows teach us to be ever on our guard. I tell ye candidly that unless you resist by your authority the mischief intended by the Commons, you shall see all obedience first withheld from the clergy and then from yourselves,

and, if you search into the real cause of all the tumults amongst them, you will find that they all rise from the want of faith."

The boldness of the bishop's speech, if it displeased those in the House of Peers who had resolved on flattering and forwarding the King's desires, whatever they might be, nevertheless pleased and comforted others. Amongst the former class was the Duke of Norfolk, who indignantly exclaimed—

"My Lord of Rochester, many of these words might have been well spared, but, I guess, the greatest clerks are very often not the wisest of men."

"My lord," was the reply, "I do not remember in my time any fool that ever proved a great clerk."

But the blood of the Commons was up, and their wrath great when the news of the bishop's speech reached them, and they at once dispatched that vilest of time-servers, Audley, their speaker, to carry their complaint to the King, murmuring that they felt themselves grievously injured by the bishop having accused them of lack of faith.

On the evening of the day that the malcontent commons had laid their grievance before the King, he summoned the bishop to his presence, and, fixing his eyes upon him with a glance which was intended to awaken fear, if indeed he was susceptible of such an emotion, he demanded "Why he had used such words as had been repeated to him?"

Unmoved by the scarcely concealed anger of the King, replied Fisher—

"May it please you, Sire, I was in council, and spoke

my mind plainly in defence of the Church, which I behold daily injured and oppressed by the common people, whose office it is not to judge of her conduct, much less to reform her ; therefore, I am bound in conscience to defend her in all that lieth in my power."

"And I, my lord, would wish you to use your words more temperately," was the reply—a warning which nevertheless gave small satisfaction to the Commons.

The latter, however, had soon ample reason to be satisfied with their monarch, for the surrender of all the smaller abbeys of the value of two hundred pounds was now insisted on, the pretence held forth being to indemnify the King for the great charges consequent on the divorce. And, on a convocation of the clergy being assembled, some of the more timid were resolved to yield and so satisfy the King.

Fisher was not slow at perceiving the pusillanimity of his brethren, and with the firmness which characterised all his movements, addressed them as follows—

"My lords, and the rest of our brethren here assembled, I pray you take great heed what you do, lest you do you know not what, and what you have not power to do. For the things demanded at our hands are none of ours to grant, nor theirs to whom we should bestow them, if we granted their desires. They are the legacies of those testators who have given them unto the Church for ever under the penalty of a curse on those who shall alienate their property from it. Moreover, if we should grant these smaller abbeys to the King, what shall we be doing but showing him the way in time to come to lay his hands on the greater. These proceedings put me in

mind of a fable, how the axe which wanted a handle came upon a time to the wood, moaning and lamenting to the great trees that he wanted a handle to work with, and so was obliged to remain idle. So he requested them to give him one of their smallest saplings within the wood to make him one. They, not mistrusting him, gave him one of their smaller trees, with which he made himself a handle. And so, having become a perfect axe, he fell to work within the same wood, and in course of time there was neither great nor small tree to be found therein. And so, my lord, if you grant the King these lesser monasteries, you do but make him a handle, with which, at his own pleasure, he may cut down all the cedars within your Lebanon, and then you may thank yourselves after you have incurred the anger of Almighty God."

The intrepidity of the bishop at this time had such an effect on his timid hearers, that, for a short time, the desires of the King remained ungratified.

About this time the bishop narrowly escaped death by poison, for, being acquainted with the cook of the bishop's palace at Lambeth Marsh, a man named Rose watched his opportunity to throw some poison into some pottage which was being prepared for his dinner. It happened, however, as if by direct interposition of the Almighty, that when the bishop was called to his dinner, finding himself unwell and with no appetite, he refused to take it as usual, and bidding his servants fall to and make a good meal, for that he could not take any food till his evening meal was served, he so retired to his study.

However, of the poisoned dish intended for the bishop, several partook, and a gentleman and a widow amongst his attendants died suddenly, and others who had partaken of the same dish never recovered their former state of health. The man who had been guilty of this atrocious crime, committing again the same offence, was afterwards executed at Smithfield.

Whilst still sojourning in his palace at Carlisle Place, Lambeth, his life was a second time attempted. He was in his study, which was to him also a place for holy reading and meditation, when a cannon bullet was shot right through the window of his house, and it was ascertained that it came from the residence of the Earl of Wiltshire, father to Mistress Anne, which was situated on the opposite side of the river. With his usual firmness and equanimity, he then called his whole household before him, saying—

“Let us truss up our baggage and be gone—this is no place for us to abide in any longer.”

Whether the King was privy to these attempts on the life of the venerable bishop, who had long since incurred his weighty displeasure, no one can say; but certain it is that Henry's anger was at its greatest height, and that he was in the habit of venting his temper by the utterance of bitter expressions respecting him when at table and elsewhere. It is a well-known fact, derived from the history of the past, that people will often execute atrocious crimes, if, by so doing, they think they can curry favour at the hands of their superiors, outstripping them in their own evil designs.

Once again in his beloved old home, dilapidated and

well nigh uninhabitable though it was, the bishop devoted his time to preaching, visiting the sick, instructing the ignorant ; and, when his more serious occupations were at an end, he was wont to go and watch his workmen who were employed in the repairs of Rochester Bridge, on which he had expended much of his slender means. While dwelling in his Manor House of Halling, in Rochester, it was one night broken open by thieves, and much of his plate was stolen. His servants, however, gave chase to the robbers, even following them into the intricacies of an adjoining forest, and, in the hurry of escape, some of the rich booty fell from the grasp of the robbers, the servants returning with it to the manor house. Meanwhile, the bishop had remained ignorant as to his loss, he not having been aroused by the forced entrance of the thieves, but when at the usual hour he went to his breakfast-room, he was surprised to see the distress apparent in his attendants, and, enquiring the reason, each seemed unwilling to tell the tale, till he commanded them to inform him of the cause of their uneasiness, assuring them that he held himself prepared to hear of any mischance that might have happened.

At length, with great reluctance, they informed him of the robbery and the loss of much of his plate, adding that they had recovered some portion of the stolen property.

“If this be all ye have to tell me,” said the bishop, “we have cause to rejoice that God hath restored us some of it, rather than be discontented that wicked men have taken any of it away. The smallest of God’s favours is more to be valued than all the evil which the

wicked may do to us is to be regretted. Therefore, let us sit down and be merry. Thank God it is no worse, and look you better to the rest."





CHAPTER IX.

CRANMER AND CROMWELL.



ON the night on which the King went to the Chase at Grafton, and made up his final resolve to disgrace the gifted prelate and chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, the latter had to make his way by torch-light, accompanied by Cavendish, his gentleman usher, to the residence of Mr. Empson, which was situated some three miles from the Chase.

Times were indeed strangely altered now, for no apartment at Grafton had been set aside for the use of the King's once highly-honoured friend.

Stephen Gardiner and Edward Fox had accompanied Henry to the Chase, and it had been arranged that they were to sleep at Waltham Abbey, in which resided a Mr. Cressy, who had engaged for the preceptor of his sons, Thomas Cranmer, destined to be the first Protestant archbishop.

Cranmer, at the age of fourteen, had been sent by his widowed mother to Jesus College, Cambridge, and in 1511 was nominated fellow of his college. At the age

of twenty-three, he fell in love with a servant in charge of an inn known as The Dolphin. Here he placed his wife after his marriage. The year following she died, and he was again restored to the fellowship at Cambridge, which he had forfeited by his marriage. He then ceased to frequent the Dolphin Inn, and made himself notorious for the sharpness and acrimony of his writings, especially those against the religious orders. When the pestilence broke out, Cranmer hurried from Cambridge, and about the year 1528 accepted the post offered by Mr. Cressy, and it was at his table that he met Drs. Fox and Gardiner.

Everyone was just then canvassing the abrupt departure of the legate Campeggio, the revoking of his commission by the Pope, the disgrace of Wolsey, and the disputes which the question of the divorce had raised in the colleges. At Cambridge the university had declared itself against the precepts of Leviticus, and Cranmer alone had more than once maintained the necessity of a speedy divorce; and after ordinary topics of conversation had been exhausted during supper, it drifted to the King and his design of putting away his wife.

Gardiner was the first to broach the subject, for he asked his companions "In what way the King could with honour draw back from that accursed cause," adding "he could not himself see how?"

Then Cranmer hazarded the question—"Do you think that the marriage of Catherine with the King is lawful or not in a religious point of view?"

"That is exactly what the Pope will not decide," replied Gardiner.

"And," responded Cranmer, sarcastically, "he is but man like any other man."

"The head of the visible church," added Fox.

"Head of the visible church! But consider, the Word of God is immutable as God Himself. Now, if the marriage be against the divine law, the dispensation of Julius is null, for the Pope has not the power to approve what God condemns. Now, if I were in the King's place, I would not address myself to the Pope."

"To whom then would you go?" responded Gardiner and Fox in one breath.¹

"I think you go not the proper way to work *to bring the matter unto a perfect conclusion and end*. There is but one truth in it which no man can discuss better than the divines, whose opinions, with those of the universities, and of other learned persons, should be all collected, and if in favour of the King, they might at once decide the matter within the sovereign's own realm."²

Gardiner, it is supposed, at once proposed to Fox to hasten to the King, and tell him of this idea as an opinion of their own, but Dr. Fox would not become an accomplice to such a deceit, which, sooner or later, would have been discovered.

But when Fox was admitted to an audience with the King, and the conversation with Cranmer was repeated to him, Henry exclaimed—

"By Saint Mary, I have the right sow by the ear. But where is Cranmer? It is requisite I should see him at once. If I had had this idea two years ago, it would

¹ Audin's *Histoire de Henri VIII.*, Vol. II., p. 8.

² Todd's *Life of Cranmer*, Vol. I., p. 19.

have saved me a deal of money. Let him be sent for out of hand."

And so a messenger was at once dispatched to Waltham Abbey in order to bring Cranmer to the presence of the King.

"I well perceive," said Henry, when he was brought before him, "that you have the right scope of the question. You must understand that I have been long troubled in conscience, and now I perceive that by this means I might have been long since relieved one way or other from the cause, if we had thus proceeded. Therefore, I pray you, Master Doctor, and, because you are a subject, I *command* you to take all pains to see that this, my cause, be furthered, so that I may shortly see whereunto I may trust."

And at once calling the Earl of Wiltshire, to him said he—

"I pray you, my lord, let Doctor Cranmer have entertainment in your house at Durham Place for a time,¹ to the intent that he may be there quiet to accomplish my request, and let him not lack books nor anything requisite for his study."

What he was commanded to do he soon did, for he produced a treatise alleging the King's object to be supported by authority of the Scripture and general councils, and denying the authority of the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) to have authority that might dispense with the Word of God."²

¹ Durham Place is supposed to have been situated on the site of the Adelphi, in the Strand, and to have been a house belonging to the Bishop of Durham.

² Todd, Vol. I., p. 21.

Now, as far as Cranmer was concerned, there can be no doubt as to his design, for he must have been morally certain that in writing such a book he did as much as lay in his power to bring on a schism in the Church. He was one of the very many, who, under the mask of hypocritical zeal in the cause of their Prince, of whose soul's weal they affected to doubt, and of which they made the plea because they desired a pretext for rending the Church from the See of Rome, beholding in the distance an abundant harvest of all good things, from which every slothful churchman, whose heart was in the world rather than in the sanctuary, or every needy and rapacious courtier expected to glean each one a profit to himself.

A strange abode had the King chosen for the studies of Cranmer—the house of the father of his mistress, and which was, of course, frequented by herself. But Cranmer knew well what was required of him, and, as soon as finished, on presenting his book to the King, the latter said to him—

“Will you abide by this that you have written before the Bishop of Rome.”

To which answered Cranmer—

“That will I do, by God's grace, if your Majesty should send me thither.”

His intercourse with the King then became more frequent. The latter soon discerned what he afterwards openly avowed, that he had no difficulty while Cranmer was at his elbow.

He was then joined to the Prince's embassy, at the head of which was Lord Wiltshire, the father of Anne.

The grounds to be stated to the Emperor on which Henry required the divorce were to be mingled with hints of the King's great power and the benefits of his friendship. And to the Pope a large present was to be offered, and *he* was to be warned of the treacherous friendship of the Emperor.

But the Pope was not to be moved either by bribes or threats. He simply replied that he would grant the King all the favour his conscience would permit.

The King had made a great mistake in sending the father of his mistress to plead his cause before the nephew of his forsaken wife. 300,000 crowns were offered him, the restoration of Catherine's marriage portion, and security that she should be maintained in a style suitable to her birth, but he indignantly replied "that he was not a merchant to sell the honour of his aunt".

"Then the King sought to obtain favourable answers from the universities, bidding his agents spare neither time nor money to gain the end they had in view. But for this end, even in England, threats, commands, promises, sometimes secret intrigues, sometimes open violence was found necessary before a favourable answer could be extorted from either of the universities."

"In Italy the King's agents were active and numerous ; their success and their failures perhaps nearly balanced. From the Pontiff they had procured a brief exhorting every man to speak his sentiments without fear or favour, and taking their respective stations in the principal cities from Venice to Rome, they distributed at discretion the monies they had received from

England, drawing an ingenious distinction between a fee and a bribe, contending that when they rewarded the subscriber for his trouble they paid him nothing as the price of his signature."

"In the German States, not one public body espoused Henry's cause. Even the reformed divines, with a few exceptions, loudly condemned the divorce, and Luther himself wrote that he would rather allow the King two wives at a time, than to separate from Catherine for the purpose of marrying another woman."¹

"In France the Bishop of Bayonne was for months employed in soliciting for votes, and Henry had written the King to employ the royal authority in his favour ; but Francis artfully pretended that he dared not risk the offence of Charles so long as his two sons were prisoners in Spain, nor could they be liberated till he had paid 2,000,000 of crowns to the Emperor, 500,000 to Henry, and had redeemed the lily of diamonds, which Maximilian and Charles had pawned to Henry VII. for 50,000 crowns of gold. The impatience of the King swallowed the bait ; he forgave the debt, made a present of the pledge, and added to it a loan of 400,000 crowns.² Still various devices were had recourse to. The majority of the members of the university of Paris were decidedly hostile. In one instance only was a plurality of voices obtained by dexterous management in favour of Henry. By order of the court, the register was carried away that the entry might not be effaced or rescinded, and an attested

¹ Lingard, Vol. V., p. 174.

² Ibid., p. 172.

copy was sent to England, and published by the King as the real decision of the university of Paris. From Orleans and Toulouse similar opinions were received. The other universities were not consulted, or their answers were suppressed."

Thus bribery, chicanery, and unworthy arts and intrigues of every description were put in force to obtain so very trifling a success.

A letter was then sent to the Pope, subscribed by the lords, spiritual and temporal, and by a certain number of Commoners, in the name of the nation, speaking of the justice of the King's cause, and complaining of the Pope's partiality, whose continued delays prevented the celebration of a lawful marriage, and ending with a threat that a remedy must be applied without his interference, for, if an evil, it would be a lesser one than the perilous situation in which England was placed, threatened as she was with the chance of a disputed succession.

The poor Pope replied with temper and firmness that the charge of partiality might have come with a better grace from the opposite party ; that he had pushed his indulgence beyond the limits of law and equity, till the whole college of cardinals charged him with injustice ; that, if lawless remedies were employed, those with whom they originated must answer for the result. He would do whatever was consistent with justice ; one thing alone he begged, and that was that they would not require him, through gratitude to man, to violate the immutable commandments of God.

And now the King began to waver and complain to

his confidants that he should never have sought a divorce had he not been assured that the papal dispensation would be easily obtainable; he would now abandon the attempt. Dismay was painted on the countenances of Anne and her friends—their long and dearly-cherished hopes seemed to be fading away, when there came to their aid an evil counsellor, who whispered his suggestions into the ears of a sensual and capricious monarch, and his name was Thomas Cromwell.

Without Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell at his elbow, the chances are that Henry might have retraced his steps. The cardinal's administration was at an end, and those were around him who had everything to gain and nothing to lose, when they poured the venom of their poisonous counsel into his willing ears.

Cromwell, the son of a fuller, had been in early youth a trooper, then he embraced the law, and finally was the servant and agent of Wolsey. He came to court on the downfall of his master "to make or mar," to use his own words.

He was keenly alive to the signs of the times. Had it been given to him and Mistress Anne to raise the veil which screens the future from our sight, and they could have beheld their own ghastly end at the hands of Henry, the headsman, the block and all its grim surroundings, they would each have faltered, and gladly have retired and spent their days in the quietude of domestic life; but the lures of ambition led them on—the last grace had been given only to be despised—it was the beginning of the end.

One after another these parasites and time-servers whispered their evil counsels to the King—each one aiming at the emolument and aggrandisement of self.

“I am young, and handsome, and attractive,” says the syren Anne Boleyn—artful and frivolous Anne Boleyn. “I have set my heart on the diadem which encircles the brows of a queen. Catherine is your lawful spouse, but she has lost the charms of youth—she is old and sickly. She will give you no male heir to the throne of England. Put her aside by fair means or foul, and exalt me to her place. Say that your conscience is distressed because you married the virgin widow of your brother ; try and blind your eyes to the fact patent to others, that passion and sensuality are your real reasons for repudiating your exemplary wife.”

“*You go not the right way to work to bring about the matter to a perfect conclusion,*”¹ suggested the Evil One by the lips of Thomas Cranmer ; “set the Vicar of Christ at nought.”

And the King felt no difficulty with Cranmer at his elbow.

What a useful tool was this future Protestant archbishop in the hands of the King, for already more than half a Lutheran, he was false to his engagements of chastity, and, defying all canonical impediments, had again married, his second wife being the niece of Osiander, the apostle of Lutheranism, though he took great care to keep her secretly in Germany, for the King was the sworn enemy of a married clergy.²

¹ Vide Todd's *Life of Cranmer*.

² “Whether it may please your Highness to suspend your judgment for a

And then came the rapacious Cromwell, the chief instrument in all that was iniquitous, the first vicar general of the so-called reformed church, and the Evil One, by his mouth, said—

“Take into your hands, my liege, the authority claimed by the supreme pontiff. The rough ways will then be made smooth; the clergy cannot help themselves, they will soon become the obsequious ministers of your will. Make yourself the supreme head of the Church.”

And the King listened and thanked his adviser, and rewarded him by making him one of his privy council.

Pride raised up its head against authority—the last inspirations of grace, those silent monitors of conscience given freely to all of woman born, had passed unheeded by. And said Henry to himself—

“Yes, verily, I will throw off the yoke and be supreme head of the Church in mine own realm.”

And then the hesitating, the timid, the lukewarm, the obsequious, and all whose hearts were in the world and not in the sanctuary, after a show of resistance, yielded to the will of the despot. But Bishop Fisher—brave, saintly John Fisher—bent not as a reed under the storm, but like the lordly oak of the forest withstood the tempest, unyielding even to the bitter end.

But we would recall that word, for his was an end

time, and not to determine the marriage of priests to be against Scripture, but rather to put both parties to silence, commanding them neither to preach, dispute, nor openly to talk thereof.” Considerations offered the King by Cranmer to induce him to proceed to a further reformation.—Addenda, Burnet's *History*, Vol. II., p. 320.

glorious in the sight of God and His angels, for his brows were adorned with the unfading crown of martyrdom.





CHAPTER. X.

KING HENRY, HEAD OF THE CHURCH!



HAT an anomaly : the King the head of the Church !

“ The rich spoils which Henry had obtained by the disgrace of Cardinal Wolsey only whetted his appetite for a more plentiful feast. The clergy were now brought under a *præmunire* for accepting the legantine power of the cardinal, and the convocation hastily assembling, threw themselves on the mercy of the King, offering him one hundred thousand pounds for a full pardon.”¹

But the King refused unless they acknowledged him to be the only supreme head of the Church and clergy of England.

The title was generally believed to be a contrivance of Cranmer and Cromwell, one an open and declared enemy of the clergy, and who had embraced the Protestant faith ; the other, though a clergyman, yet one that never stuck to betray his brethren, if he could thereby pleasure his prince. Some days passed in consultation, and then, says Dr. Hall, Fisher, this stout

¹ Tierney's *Dodd's Church History*, Vol. I., p. 233.

prelate and Athanasian of the clergy, addressed the meeting in the following words—

“My lords, it is true we are all under the King’s lash, and stand in need of his favour, yet this does not justify us in doing that which will render us ridiculous and contemptible to the whole Christian world, for what will it avail us to keep our houses, cloisters, and convents, possess our goods and lose our consciences. Let us, my lords, consider what we have to do, and what to grant, with the dangers that will ensue, or whether it is in our power to grant what the King asks at our hands, or if he be an apt person to receive it, so that we may go carefully to work, and not as men who had lost all honesty and wit as well as worldly fortune.

“Consider, I pray you, what the supremacy of the Church is, which we are to give unto the King. It is to exercise the spiritual government of the Church, which according to what I have ever learned, both in the gospel and throughout the whole course of divinity, mainly rests on two points.

“Firstly. In the power of loosing and binding sinners, for our Lord said to St. Peter when he made him head of the Church, *To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven.*

“Good, my Lords. Can we say to the King, *tibi*, to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven? If you say, ‘Yes,’ where is your warrant? If you say ‘No,’ then you have yourselves answered that you cannot put these keys into his hands.

“Secondly. The supreme government of the Church consists in feeding Christ’s sheep and lambs, for our

Saviour, when He made Peter His universal shepherd, gave him unlimited jurisdiction—*Feed My lambs*, and not only so, but to those that are the feeders of My lambs, *feed My sheep*. Now, my Lords, can any of us say unto the King, *pasce oves*? God hath given some to be apostles, some evangelists, some pastors, some doctors, that they might edify the body of Christ. So you must make the King one of these before you can set him over it; and when you have made him supreme head of the Church, he must be such an one as may be answerable to all the members of Christ's body. And it is not the few ministers of an island that can constitute a head over the universe; or, at least, by such an example, we must allow as many heads over the Church as there are sovereign powers within Christ's dominion, and then what will become of the supremacy? Every member must have a head. *Attendite vobis* was not said to Kings but Bishops.

“Thirdly. Let us consider the inconveniencies that will follow such a grant. We cannot grant it to the King without renouncing our unity with the See of Rome, and if the matter went no further than that of renouncing Clement VII., we yet also renounce the four general councils, which none have ever forsaken; also all canonical and ecclesiastical laws of the Church of Christ; we renounce all other Christian princes, the unity of the Christian world, and are drowned in the waves of heresies, schisms, sects, and divisions.

“For the first and general Council of Nice acknowledged Sylvester (the Bishop of Rome) to hold authority over them by sending their decrees to be ratified by him.

"The council of Constantinople acknowledged Pope Damasus to be their head, by admitting him to give sentence against the heretics Macedonius, Sabellius, and Eunomius.

"The council of Ephesus acknowledged Pope Celestine to be their chief judge by admitting his condemnation of the heretic Nestorius.

"The council of Chalcedon acknowledged Pope Leo to be their chief head, and all general councils of the whole world ever acknowledged the Pope of Rome (only) to be supreme head of the Church, and now shall we own another head? or one head to be in England and another in Rome?

"Fourthly. We deny all canonical and ecclesiastical laws which depend on the authority of the Apostolic See. We renounce the judgment of all other Christian princes, whether they be Protestant or Catholic, Jew or Gentile; for by this reason Herod might have been head of the Church of the Jews, Nero head of the Church of Christ, the Emperor head of the Protestant Churches of Germany, and the Church must never have had a head till about 300 years after Christ.

"Fifthly. The King's Majesty is not susceptible of this gift. Ozias, for meddling with the priestly office was, resisted by Azarias, thrust out of the temple, and told by him that it belonged not to his office. Now, if the priest spake truth, then is the King not to meddle in this matter. If he spoke amiss, why did God afflict the king with leprosy and not the priest?

"When the Ark of God was being brought home, did King David place himself in the order of the priest-

hood? Did he so much as touch the ark, or execute the most trifling office belonging to the priestly function? Did he not rather go before and humble himself amongst the people, and declare that he would abase himself in his own eyes, so that God were glorified?

“All good Christian emperors have evermore refused ecclesiastical authority. For on the first general council of Nice certain bills were privately brought to Constantine to be ordered by his authority, but he commanded them to be burnt, saying, ‘*Dominus vos constituit*. God hath ordained you priests, and hath given you power to be judges over us, therefore, by right in these things, we are to be judged by you, but you are not to be judged by me.’ Valentine, the good emperor, was required by the bishops to be present with them to reform the heresy of the Arians, but he answered, ‘Forasmuch as I am one of the members of the laity, it is not lawful for me to define such controversies, but let the priests, to whom God hath given charge thereof, assemble where they will in due order.’

“Theodosius, writing to the council of Ephesus, saith ‘it is not lawful for him that is not of the holy order of bishops to interfere with ecclesiastical matters,’ and now, then, tell me, shall we make our own prince the head of the Church, when all good kings have abhorred the very thought thereof, and so many wicked kings have been visited by plagues for so doing. Truly, my lords, I think those are his best friends that dissuade him from it, and he will be the worst possible enemy to himself if he obtain it.

“Lastly. If this thing *should* come to pass, then farewell to all unity with Christendom, for, as that holy and blessed martyr, Saint Cyprian, saith, all unity depends upon the holy see, as, on the authority of S. Peter’s successors, for heresies, sects, and schisms take their rise in this, that men do cast away their obedience to the chief bishop, and if we cast aside our communion with the Church we must grant one of two things, either the Church be the Church of God, or she be a malignant church. If you reply, my lords, she is of God, and in her Christ is truly taught, and His sacraments rightly administered, then how can we cast ourselves from her pale and forsake her.

“And if you reply she is *not* of God but in error, then it follows that we, the dwellers in this land, have not yet received the true faith of Christ, seeing we have received no other gospel, or doctrine, or sacrament than we have received from her, and so have been all this while deceived. And if we renounce the common father of Christendom and all the general councils, especially the first four, which none can renounce, and all the countries of Christendom, and we forsake the unity of the Christian world, then is the grant of the supremacy to the King a renouncing of unity, a tearing assunder the seamless garment of Christ, a dividing of His mystical body limb from limb, and coupling tail to tail, like Samson’s foxes, to set the Church on fire. And this it is which ye are about to do; wherefore I say to you in time, and not too late, *Look you to it.*”

And as the timid and hesitating, half-reluctant, yet

from fear, half-willing, to grant the sacrilegious request of the King, listened to the brave Bishop's words, their hearts seemed to be inspired with new courage ; and for this time the King's demand was withstood. Nevertheless he desisted not, and again sent to the convocation, threatening them with his most severe displeasure if they failed to grant his just and reasonable request.

The clergy had, as we have already said, incurred the praemunire, and being exposed to the ruthless envy of a court faction, were now at the King's mercy, and having offered him an enormous sum (previously mentioned) by way of compensation, Cromwell, who had first put the idea into the King's head, informed the convocation that no compensation would be accepted until they acknowledged Henry as supreme head and protector of the clergy and Church of England. The novelty of the claim, its repugnance to the sense of all antiquity, says Dr. Hall, followed by the eloquent speech of Bishop Fisher, caused it, as we have seen, to be in the first instance rejected. It was, however, soon after admitted with a clause by which the prelates declared they allowed it "*as farre as was consistent with the laws of God*"; but this did not satisfy the King, who insisted on a more explicit acknowledgment. Meanwhile the Bishop of Rochester and Dr. Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, were the only bishops who were immoveable, but his brother prelates agreed to ask the opinion of Fisher as to the proposed modification, to which he replied :—

" Thus stands the case, my masters. The heart, once upon a time, said to the members of the body, let me also be your head, and I will promise that I will neither

see, nor hear, nor smell, nor speak. I will close and shut mine eyes, and ears, and mouth, and nostrils, and will execute no other office than a mere heart should do.”¹

Little consolation then did the more faint-hearted of his brethren receive from the Bishop’s fable ; and again the King sent messengers to the convocation to know its mind in this matter. And their specious arguments, on the one hand, and fear of the despot’s anger on the other, should they withhold the much coveted authority, staggered some and silenced all, save the courageous Bishop Fisher.

“It is true,” said he, “the King may be graciously pleased to allow the clause, ‘*as far as the laws of Christ will allow*’; but what if he should alter his mind? Where shall be our remedy? Again, when once this authority is invested in him, his successors will expect the same, and the Parliament will annex that dignity to the crown. What if a woman succeed, shall she too be head of the Church? What if an infant, can he be head? This will be not only to make the Church no Church, but the Scripture, no Scripture, and at last our Lord, to be no Christ.”

Much was then said by the commissioners as to the intention of the King. Though the supremacy were granted simply and absolutely according to his demand, yet it was to be so understood that he had no further power thereby than the laws of God allowed. And if so, why, said they, should so many doubts be forecasted?

Fearing that in the end his fellow prelates would desert the cause for which he so earnestly pleaded,

¹ Dr. Hall’s *Life of Fisher*.

through dread of the King's displeasure, the Bishop addressed himself at once to the commissioners.

"You think," said he, "that we stand too stiff to our opinions. It is not so. We speak but in defence of the Church, whose children ye are, equally with ourselves, and within whose communion there is but one salvation, common unto all. Wherefore, I pray you, misconstrue not our tenderness unto the King, and as to this demand, that his Majesty may see we do what lieth in our power. Let all that he hath protested and taken upon oath be recorded, and the words, *quantum per legem Dei licet*¹ be inferred in the grant, and for my part it shall be granted."

But when the King's agents repeated what had passed in convocation, the King's anger was at its height.

"Mother of God," he exclaimed, "ye have played a pretty prank. I thought to have made fools of them, and now ye have made a fool of me by the way you have conducted the business. Go quickly unto them again, I say, and let me have the matter passed without any *quantum* or *tantum*. I will have no *quantums* nor *tantums* in the business, but let it be done."

"Whereupon immediately they returned to the convocation house, crying out with open mouths and continued clamour to have the grant passed absolutely, and to credit the King's honour, who had made unto them so solemn an oath and protestations, falling into disputations with the Bishops how far a temporal prince's power was over the clergy, but the Bishops soon disputed them into having nothing else to say, but whosoever would refuse to condescend to the King's demand

¹ As far as the law of God will allow.

therein was not worthy to be accounted a true and loyal subject, nor to have the benefit of such a one."

"After which nothing could prevail; for then the clergy answered with unanimous consent and full resolution, that they neither could nor would grant unto the King the supremacy of the Church without those conditional words, *quantum per legem Dei licet*. And so the orators departed, relating unto the King all that had passed, who, seeing no other remedy, accepted it with that condition, granting unto the clergy a pardon for their bodies and goods, they paying him £100,000, which was paid every penny."¹

"Nothing," writes Reginald Pole to the Emperor, "could be so reasonable a prejudice against the new supremacy as the integrity of the leaders who opposed it."

"If any one had asked the King before the violence of his passions had hurried him out of the reach of reason and reflection, whom of all the Episcopal order he chiefly considered, on whose affection and fidelity he most relied, he would, without any hesitation, have answered, the Bishop of Rochester. When the question was not put to him, he was accustomed of his own accord to glory that no other prince or kingdom had so distinguished a prelate. Of this I was witness, when turning to me, on my return from my travels, he said 'he did not imagine I had met with any one in foreign parts who could be compared to him, either for virtue or learning'. This judgment of his prince was repaid by an equal zeal and fidelity in the Bishop. He constantly declared that, apart from his duty as a subject, the King had been born

¹ Dr. Hall's *Life of Fisher*.

in his own diocese, and that his Majesty's grandmother, whose ghostly father he had been, had recommended he grandson to his peculiar care, she having survived both his parents,"¹ so that he was bound to him by several ties.

¹ Philipp's *Life of Cardinal Pole*, Vol. I., p. 132.





CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST PROTESTANT ARCHBISHOP.



ARCHBISHOP WARHAM has passed to his rest.

“In many respects a good as well as a learned prelate, he mourned over the impending ruin of the Church in England, foretelling that Thomas Cranmer would be his successor, and would inflict greater injury than the blood of S. Thomas the martyr had purchased good. Thus grieving and dying, and, it is to be hoped, repenting of his own feebleness of opposition, Warham, in an upper room in his palace at Lambeth, wrote, in presence of three witnesses, a protestation to be immediately made public, in which he declared that he did not, and could not in conscience, assent to the recent enactment.”¹

The Pope had been much distressed when the news reached him of the Queen’s formal expulsion, for when the King left Windsor he had sent imperious orders for her to be gone before his return ; and he had written to him to beg of him to recall his Queen and dismiss her rival. But years had passed since first he sought the

¹ Flanagan’s *Church History*, Vol. II., p. 49.

divorce ; and Warham was dead. He was supreme head of the Church. He designed Cranmer for the vacant see ; and he resolved on at once uniting himself with Anne Boleyn.

On the 25th of January, before daybreak, Rowland Lee, one of the King's chaplains, was hastily called up, and received orders to celebrate Mass in a room in the west turret of Whitehall ; and there he found the King, with two grooms of the chamber, and Anne Boleyn, accompanied by her train-bearer. Lee made some opposition when he found out why he had been sent for, but Henry assured him the Pope had pronounced in his favour, and that the document was safe in his closet.¹

And now came Cranmer's reward for his services, Henry proposed to raise him to the Archbishopric of Canterbury. He at first resisted the offer, not fearing the burthen which the King was about to lay upon him, nor from any sentiment of Christian humility ; for Cranmer counted amongst his very few virtues neither shame nor modesty ; but the husband of the niece of Osiander scrupled to accept the Archbishopric, because in the eyes of Henry every married priest deserved either the stake or the halter. After his nuptials at Nuremberg, Cranmer had prudently left his wife in Germany, awaiting better days, when, Catholicism being destroyed in England, he might avow his marriage, and, like Luther, whose creed he had adopted as to priestly continence, might give his arm in the streets of Cambridge to his new companion.²

¹ Lingard, p. 189.

² Audin's *Henri VIII.*

Cranmer, however, was finally nominated to the vacant archiepiscopal see. "There can be little doubt that he foresaw the difficulties and the dangers that were likely, under a Monarch so impetuous and yet so superstitious as Henry, to surround the lofty station proposed to him. This, of itself, would lead him to decline the proposal. His recent marriage might strengthen the reluctance."¹

To the surprise and sorrow of many, the papal confirmation was obtained, and in a few days after its arrival the consecration followed. But resolved to act in opposition to the papal authority, he called five witnesses into the chapter-house of St. Stephens, and declared that by the oath of obedience to the Pope, which, for form's sake, he should be obliged to take, he did not intend to bind himself to anything contrary to the law of God, or against the King, or such reforms as he might wish to make. Then from the chapter-house he went to the high altar and took the pontifical oath. This was repeated a second time after the consecration, and then he received the pallium from the hands of the papal delegates.

For such conduct he was deservedly branded with the guilt of fraud and perjury.

And, now, with an archbishop to his own mind, and subservient to his will, the King proceeded to get himself divorced speedily. Cranmer well knew how to set about his work, and acted the farce of writing to the King, begging to be allowed to settle the cause in his archiepiscopal court, and having received the royal license, he commanded the Queen in three several cita-

¹Dr. Todd's *Life of Cranmer*, Vol. I., p. 54.

tions to appear in his court. She heeded not his proceedings, and, pronouncing her contumacious, he brought the matter speedily to an end, issued a sentence of divorce, and gravely bade the Prince submit to the law of God, and to avoid excommunication by putting aside his brother's widow.

The next step in this solemn mockery was to hold another court at Lambeth, and declare that Henry and Anne were and had been joined in lawful wedlock.

Then came the last insult to the hapless Catherine, for as soon as the ready tool of her husband had pronounced judgment, she was commanded by the King to assume the style of Dowager Princess of Wales.

It was Archbishop Lee and Bishop Tunstall who read to her six articles showing why she ought only to be considered as Prince Arthur's widow, and that she ought to resign the title of Queen.¹

The last remnant of Catherine's patience now gave way, and she vowed she would never quit the title of Queen, that she *was* the King's wife, and not his subject; that the divorce had been pronounced by a mere shadow, a man of the King's own making; that no threat should compel her to affirm a falsehood, and that she feared not those which have the power of the body, but Him only that hath the power of the soul.

Henry had not the heart to proceed to extremities

¹ We admonished her likewise not to call herself your Highness' wife, for that your Highness was discharged of that marriage made with her, and had contracted new marriage with your dearest wife, Queen Anne, and forasmuch as, thanked be God, fair issue has already sprung of this marriage, and more is likely to follow by God's grace.—*State Papers*.

against her. His repudiated wife was the only person who could brave him with impunity.¹

¹ Dr. Lingard, Vol. VI., p. 198.





CHAPTER XII.

YULE TIDE AT HALLING.



BUT little care had Bishop Fisher for the entertainments and pleasures of this life, and yet he found the sincerest satisfaction in contributing to the enjoyment of others. Amongst his peculiarities is noted a fondness for coursing and field sports. He never sat fully one hour to dinner. In eating or drinking he limited himself to certain quantities which were measured and weighed out for him, and when travelling from Rochester to London (in that last memorable journey), because it was his dinner-hour, he took it on the top of Shooter's Hill, his people standing around him.

"This godly bishop, long before his death, either by his great wisdom and profound learning, whereby he knew what miseries would come into England, or else by special revelation from God, had fore-knowledge that himself should dye otherwise than by a natural death for ye faith of Christ's Church. For three or four years before his death, when on a Christmas time he had caused to be prepared worshipful and honest fare for his kinsfolk and friends that then flocked to Halling, he com-

¹ Bruce, *Archæologie*.

manded his officers to entertain them heartily with good cheer. Coming to them with pleasant greetings, he, after awhile left them, and went away to his study to pray and meditate, when, as he did not return, one of his most trusty servants sought him, saying—

“‘My lord, I pray you leave off your study, at least for ye merry time of Christmas, whilst your friends be here to visit you, and bear you company, or else will they think themselves not welcome.’

“‘How so,’ quoth the bishop; ‘have they not all such things that were prepared for them?’

“‘Yea,’ replied the servant; ‘but what then? Your lordship’s presence amongst them will cheer your friends far more than your meat and pastimes.’

“‘Well, then,’ replied the bishop, ‘I pray you be content and let me alone here in my study, for my friends, I dare say, will be well content that I follow mine own mind in mine own house, and therefore pray them in my name to be as merry without me as if I were with them. As for me, I have other things to do than to cheer my guests or to be present at their worldly pleasures. For, I tell you in secret, I *know* I shall not die in my bed, wherefore it behoveth me to think continually on the dreadful hour of my account.’”¹

Thus, then, it would seem the veil which hides the future from our sight had been partially lifted from the eyes of saintly Bishop Fisher. And so at the glad season of Christmas in the olden times, which was celebrated with even more of rejoicing than in our own days, he could not find it in his heart to relax and participate in the

¹ Coll. Gresh. Lib., Norfolk.

festivities of the season, or mingle with those friends whom he had invited to pass their Yule Tide in his Manor House of Halling, but retired to meditate on the Calvary which awaited him. He was bound to resist, like Sir Thomas More—he could not do otherwise. Life was as nothing in comparison with bearing testimony to the truth, and though he had not yet lent his ear to the predictions of the enthusiastic visionary, Elizabeth Barton, yet he saw full clearly what his end would surely be.

And still Bishop Fisher had not neglected the duties of hospitality, for it would seem from what we have quoted from the Norfolk manuscripts, that he had bidden to his home a goodly gathering of relatives and friends, and, abstemious himself, had nevertheless prepared an abundance of good cheer for others.

But to keep Yule Tide in a social point of view, as far as *he* was himself concerned, was evidently not in him, and we may reasonably suppose that his meditations were beside the Cross of Christ on Calvary's Mount, as well as beside the wailing babe in the manger at Bethlehem.





CHAPTER XIII.

MISPRISION OF TREASON.

LITTLE did saintly Bishop Fisher think when he listened to the predictions of Elizabeth Barton, known as the Holy Maid of Kent, that it would be made the ground of the first prosecution against him on a charge of misprision of treason for concealing the predictions against the King, one of her prophecies being to the effect that if he did not desist from the divorce, but married again, he should not be king more than a month after. Attracting the notice of her simple neighbours in the Kentish village in which she dwelt, this young woman, who was subject to fits, frequently gave utterance to incoherent expressions which were ignorantly attributed to preternatural agency, hence the rector of the parish advised her to quit Adlington for a convent in Canterbury.

Wolsey and Archbishop Warham had both heard of her predictions, and some feeble impressions had been left upon their minds. She had even communicated them to the King himself, who had hitherto treated them with contempt and ridicule. To the cardinal she spoke of a vision in which she saw the Almighty deliver

three swords into his hand, and then declare that unless he made a proper use of these swords "it should be laid sorely to his charge". Her prediction to Henry was more dangerous. That if he were to divorce Catherine, he would die within a month, and be succeeded by his daughter Mary.

The archbishop viewed the matter in a different light to the King, and persuaded himself that her predictions kept alive amongst the people a hostile feeling to the divorce and the new statutes respecting the church, and being taken from her convent she was examined first by Cranmer, and then by Cranmer and Cromwell, and brought to acknowledge that whatever she had said "was feigned of her own imagination only, to satisfy the minds of them which resorted to her and to obtain worldly praise".¹

A bill of attainder was then brought in against the maid and her abettors—Brockings, Masters, Deering, Gold, Rich, and Risley—and of misprision of treason against all who knew of her predictions and had kept them secret from the King. All who were attainted suffered at Tyburn—Barton throwing all the blame on her companions, who, she said, were learned clerks, while she was simple and ignorant, and they ought to have detected and exposed the illusion.

But of far more exalted rank than these were the Bishop of Rochester and the late Lord Chancellor, who both came under the provisions of the bill.

"It was," says Mr. Bruce, "in the character of one of Catherine's counsel on the hearing of her cause before

¹ Lingard, Vol. VI., p. 208.

the legates at Blackfriars that Fisher first drew upon himself the displeasure of the King, and the opposition which in conscience as a bishop he felt himself bound to offer to Henry's subsequent measures, turned that monarch's previous affection for him into the most intense hatred. There is no doubt but that his constant opposition rendered him a thorn in the side of the despotic king and his servile courtiers, who were only too glad to have an opportunity of crushing him afforded to them by his interference in the well-known case of the Maid of Kent."

Cromwell, who was then Secretary of State, sent Robert Fisher to his brother with a sharp reproof for his carriage and demeanour in the matter of Elizabeth Barton, but withal advised him to write to the King and desire his pardon for his offences.

The bishop, however, had no mind to plead guilty to faults he had never committed, and wrote to Cromwell refusing to ask pardon for offences of which he was innocent. His letter may not be in existence, but its contents may be gathered by Cromwell's letter to him, which is exceedingly lengthy. The following extract will of itself show the imperious and insolent tone he assumed when addressing the bishop—

"My lord,—In my right hearty wise, I commend me to your lordship, giving you to understand that I have received your letters dated at Rochester, the 18th day of this month, in which ye declare what craft and cunning ye have to persuade, and to set a good countenance upon an ill matter, drawing some scripture to your purpose, which, well-weighed, according to the places

whereout they were taken, makes not so much for your purpose as you allege them for. And wherein the first leaf of your letters ye write that ye doubt nothing, neither before God nor the world, if need shall require so to declare yourself. Whatever hath been said of you, that ye have not deserved such heavy words nor terrible threats as hath been sent from me to you by your brother.

“How you can declare yourself before God and the world when need shall require, I cannot tell; but, I think, verily, that your declaration made by these letters is far insufficient to prove that you have deserved no heavy words in this behalf. And, to say plainly, I sent you *no* heavy words, but words of great comfort, willing your brother to show you how merciful and benign the Prince was, and that I thought it expedient for you to write and recognise your offences and desire his pardon, which his Grace would not deny you now in your age and sickness, which, my counsel, I would you had followed instead of writing to me excusing yourself, as if there was no manner of fault in you. . . . I instantly desire you to answer whether if the maid had showed you as many revelations for the continuance of the King's marriage, which he *now* enjoyeth, as she did to the contrary, ye would have given as much credence to her. Finally, ye desire, for the passion of Christ, to be no more twitched in the matter, for, if ye be put to that stand, ye will not lose your soul, but will speak as your conscience bindeth you, with many more words of great courage. If ye had taken my counsel, sent by your brother, and followed the same, submitting yourself

to the King's grace for your offences, ye would not have been troubled more in the matter."¹

In the following letter from Fisher to the secretary, he appeals merely to his compassion on account of the illness from which he was suffering—

"Master Cromwell,—After my right humble commendations, I beseech you to have some pity on me, considering the case and condition that I am in, and I doubt not but ye would if ye might see me in the plight that I am in now, for, in good faith, now almost six weeks I have had grievous coughe, with a fever in beginning thereof, as divers others in this country have had, and many have died thereof. And now the matter is fallen down into my legs and feet. Such swellings and ache of my legs may yet abate, and then, by the grace of our Lord, I shall with all speed obey your commandment. Thus fare ye well, at Rochester, the xxvij daye of January.

"By your faithful beadsman,

"JO. ROFFS."²

The following appears to be an answer to Cromwell's request that he would write a letter of submission to the king—

"After my right humble commendations I most entirely beseeche you that I no further be moved to make answer to your letters, for I see that myne answere must rather growe into a great booke, or else be insufficient, so that ye shall still take occasion to be offended, and I nothing profit. For I perceive that everything that I

¹ *Vide Letter of Cromwell, Burnet's Coll. Records, Vol. II., p. 123.*

² *Col. M.S. Vespasian, F. XIII., fol. 1546.*

write is ascribed either to craft, or to wilfulness, or to unkindness against my soveraigne, so that my writinge rather provokith you to displeasure, than furthers me in any project concerninge your faver which I most covet. Nothing I read in all youre longe letters, that I take any comfort of, but only the subscription wherein it pleased you to call yourself my friend, whiche undoubtedlye was a worde of much consolation unto me, and therefore I beseeche you so to contynew, and so to shew yourself unto me at this tyme.

“In two points of my writinge methoughte you were most offendede, and both concerned the king’s grace, one was where I excused myself by the displeasure that his highness took with me when I spake once or twice unto him of like matters. The other was where I touched on his great matter. And as to the firste, methinke it very hard that I might not signify unto you suche things secretely as might be most effectuall for myne excuse, and as to the second, my study and purpose was specially to decline that I should not be straytened to offende his grace in that behalf, for then I must needs declare my conscience which as then I wrote I would be lothe to do any more largely than I have done ; not that I condemne any other men’s conscience, there consciences may save them, and mine must save me. Wherefore, good Master Cromwell, I beseeche you for the love of God, be contented with this my answer, and to give credence unto my brother in suche things as he hath to say unto you. Thus fare ye well, at Rochester the xxxj. daye of Januarij, by your faythefull Beadsman,

“JO. ROFFS.”

“Supposing Cromwell’s accusations against Fisher respecting the Nun were true, still no legal crime could be imputed to him. It was considered possible she might be inspired, and his duty was confined to the satisfaction of his own conscience.”¹ “Archbishop Warham and Sir Thomas More had believed in her prophecies, and had spoken of them to Fisher, but the most serious accusation brought against him was that he had concealed these prophecies from the king, but she herself told him that she had told the king, and he knowing that she had been with Henry believed her; moreover, she had not spoken of any evil that was to happen him save by a visitation of providence; also, the act of attainder of Barton speaks of the books that Deering and Brocking had had printed, therefore if made public by others, it clearly suggests that the charge was got up against Fisher in order to crush and silence him.”

“The quiet, melancholy tone of the bishop’s letters is very affecting, and the reader will observe that he begs not to be compelled to answer further letters, as do what he will, to everything, he says, a bad motive is attributed.”²

The bishop’s name, however, was with that of More, the ex-chancellor, speedily included in the bill of attainder, for misprision of treason, and then suffering as he was, both in mind and body, he wrote a long letter to the lords justifying his own conduct, and contending that it was impossible he could have violated the law in believing Barton (on the evidence of good and learned

¹ Mr. Bruce’s *Archæologia*, Vol. XXV.

² *Vide* Bruce.

men), to have been a virtuous woman, that such was the impression on his own mind when he conversed with her. Two reasons had swayed him in not speaking of the conversation he had held with her to the king, the one, that she alluded only to the visitation of Providence, and not of any personal violence to the king, when she said he would not live seven months after the divorce, and secondly, he knew she had already had an interview with the king himself.

The bill was, however, read a second time, and the bishop made a last and a fruitless attempt to pacify the king by addressing to him the following letter from his old home at Rochester, which he was so soon to exchange for the Tower.

“Please it your most gracious highness benignly to hear my most humble suit which I make to your grace, and pardon me that I come not to you for the same, for in good fayth I have had so many perilous diseases, one after another, beginning before Advent, and now, by long continuance they have brought my body into that weakness that without risk of destruction, which I dare say your grace would not wish, I may not as yet take upon me to travel.¹ I wrote to Master Cromwell, your most trusty counsellor, beseeching him to obtain your gracious license for me to be absent from parliament for this cause, and he put me at rest as to so doing. Now, this it is, most gracious Sovereign, in your most high court of Parliament there is put a bill against me, concerning the Nun of Canterbury, and intending my condemnation for not revealing such words as she had said to me

¹ Cotton MS., *Cleopatra*, Evi. fol. 162.

touching your Highness, wherein I most humbly beseech your grace, that without displeasing you, I may shew you the considerations which led me to do so, which when your most excellent wisdom hath deeply considered, I trust your charitable goodness will not impute any blame to me. A truth it is that this Nun was with me thrice in coming from London to Rochester, as I wrote to Master Cromwell and shewed him the occasion of her coming, and of my again sending to her.

“The first time she came to my house she was not sent for by me, she then told me she had been with your grace, and that she had told you of a revelation she had had from Almighty God, your grace I trust will not be displeased with my repeating thereof. She said that if your grace went forth with the purpose you intended, you should not be King of England seven months after.

“I conceived not such words, I stake it on my soul that no malice or evil was intended or meant to your highness by any mortal man, those were only the threats of God, as she affirmed. And though this were feigned that (as I would be saved), she said to me, I never counselled her to that feigning, nor was privy to it, nor to any such purposes as is now said.

“Nevertheless, if she had told me the revelation, and had not also told me that she had reported the same to your grace, I had been very much to blame, and deserving extreme punishment for not disclosing the same to your Highness, or to some of your counsel, but sithen (since) she did assure me that she had plainly told your Grace the same thing, I thought that your grace would have suspected I had come to renew her tale again to

you, rather for the confirming of my own opinion, than for any other cause.

“I beseech your Highness not to be displeased with me for what I say. It presseth on my heart most gracious sovereign Lord to my no little heaviness your grevouse letter, and after that your moche fearfull words that your grace said to me when shewing you my mind and opinion in this same matter, notwithstanding that your highness had so often and strictly commanded me to search for the same before, I was right loth to come again to your grace with such a tale appertaining to it.

“Many other considerations I had, but this was the very reason why I came not to your grace, for in good fayth, I dreaded lest I should thereby provoke you to further anger against me.

“My lord of Canterbury also, who was your great counsellor, told me she had been with you, and had shewed your grace the same matter, and of him (as I will answer before God), I learned greater things of her pretended visions than she told me herself, and at that time I told him she had been with me, and spoken as I have written before.

“I trust that your excellent wisdom and learning seeth that there is in me no fault for not revealing her words to your grace, when she herself declared to me she had done so. And my lord of Canterbury that then was, also knew the same, wherefore most gracious sovereign, in my most humble wise, I beseech your highness dismiss me of this trouble, and I shall the more quietly serve God, and pray for your grace.

“This, if there were a great offence in me, should be a

merit in you to pardon, but much more taking the case as it is, I trust you will so do. My body is weakened with many diseases and infirmities, and my soul is much unquiet with this trouble, so that my heart is more withdrawn from God and the devotion of prayer than I would ; verily, I think my life will not long continue, wherefore, eftsoon, I beseech your highness that of your charity I may be delivered from this trouble, and only have to prepare my soul for God, and to make it ready against the coming of death, and never more to come abroad in the world. This, most gracious Lord, I beseech your highness by all the singular and excellent endowments of your noble body and soul, and for the love of Christ also, that so dearly with His most precious blood redeemed your soul and mine, and during my life I shall not cease, as I am bounden, and yet now the more entirely, to make my prayer to God for the preservation of your most royal Majesty. At Rochester the xxvii. daye of Februarij.

“ Yr. most humble beadsman and subject,

“JO. ROFFS.”

“ With Cromwell’s usual craft he wished the bishop to own himself guilty, and if he had done so all freedom of action would have gone. Fisher’s conscience was like that of More, not elastic to suit the exigency of the times as was then fashionable. The king’s ‘grevouse letters, and moche fearful word,’ when Fisher set himself up in opposition to the divorce had made a great impression on him. The whole proceedings against both the Chancellor and the Bishop, were marked by an utter disregard of the constitutional forms of truth and

justice, and we know not which most to condemn—the ingratitude and malignity of the king, or the cold-blooded heartlessness of his advisers.”¹

¹ Bruce, *Archæologia*, Vol. XXV.





CHAPTER XIV.

BENT, NOT BROKEN.



AIN were all the pleadings of the bishop, who had written to the Lords justifying himself.¹ They dared not act in opposition to the will of Henry. He was attainted with the others, and compounded with the crown for his freedom and his personalities in the sum of three hundred pounds.

Not only were the bishop and his illustrious friend Sir Thomas More renowned for their virtue and learning throughout all England, but also on the continent. But the King was resolved to subdue their courage if possible, therefore it was not long before the storm broke over their heads in earnest, and they were summoned to appear before the commissioners at Lambeth Palace, in order to have the oath of succession tendered to them. Still suffering from the effects of his late illness, the bishop received the summons with his customary equanimity, and immediately on receiving the peremptory command of the commissioners—Cranmer, Audley, Cromwell, and the Abbot of Westminster—to appear before them on a certain day, all excuse set apart, he called his officers together, and consulted with them as

¹ For the Bishop's letter to the Lords, see appendix.

to the disposal of his goods. First he allotted to Michael House, in Cambridge, where he had been educated, the sum of a hundred pounds, which was paid to the college in gold. Another portion he caused to be divided amongst his servants, allowing to every one of them a rate according to the situation he held. Likewise to the poor of Rochester, he assigned another portion to be distributed amongst them. The rest he reserved for himself to defray his necessity in prison whereof he accounted himself sure, as soon as he had appeared before the commissioners, always referring to S. John's College in Cambridge his books and such other parcels of goods as he before had given, and again borrowed of it, though indeed his meaning in that point was never fulfilled.¹ And then he bade farewell to his dear old home, knowing full well that he should never again behold it.

The story quickly got abroad respecting the summons of the bishop, and, as he passed through the town of Rochester, a multitude of people gathered around him, and as he rode on his way he gave them his blessing, all the while bareheaded. Some of the people cried that they should never see him any more, others denounced woes unto them that were the cause of all his troubles, others exclaimed against the wickedness of the times, and all of them lamented and bewailed the danger they were in of losing him.

At the hour of noon he paused to take rest and refreshment on the brow of Shooters Hill, saying he would now "make use of his time, and dine in the

¹ Harleian MS.

open air while he might," and those of his servants who had accompanied him spread a homely meal before him which he had caused to be provided, their hearts full heavy as they thought of their approaching separation.

All nature must needs have been jubilant with the freshness of the early spring, the birds made melody in his ears, the sun shone, and the smooth sward on which his aged form reclined was green as an emerald, and here he reposed him for awhile. And, after he had dined, he cheerfully took horse again, and, reaching Lambeth in the evening, proceeded straight to his palace in Carlisle Place.

On the following morning he presented himself at Lambeth Palace in order to wait on the commissioners.

How often have we gazed at the grey walls of that old palace and mused on the times of yore. And one after another have risen before our mind's eye the prelates of the old Church, the long array closed under the eighth Henry, till, in God's own time, England shall again be gathered into the fold.

But let us pass onwards, for Cranmer, the perjured priest, false to his canonical vows, is the first archbishop of the so-called Reformation, the ready tool of the tyrant King, and before this new-fangled prelate must the holy Bishop Fisher appear. At his behest has he been dragged from his peaceful home in Rochester.

The bishop had reached the palace a little before his friend More. He had walked from Carlisle Place, leaning on his stick, pale and emaciated by reason of his long illness. He had hoped that the heavy fine lately imposed on him would have set matters at rest ;

but no, the tempest had only been stilled for a time both with himself and Sir Thomas.

A great number of the clergy had taken the oath of succession, awed into compliance, but the characters of the friends, More and Fisher, were cast in a very different mould. Life itself was only valuable to these great men in so far as they could keep it with a conscience stainless and pure. And they greet each other affectionately, for they feel convinced that they shall never meet again until they have passed through the valley of the shadow of death, and shall prostrate themselves before the Infinite Majesty of God, in the glories of their eternal home. And, standing beneath the portal of the palace, says More—

“Well met, my lord ; I hope we shall soon meet in heaven.”

“This should of a surety be the way thither, for we are in a strait gate,” replied the bishop.

“Now was the thing come to pass which was nothing terrible to *him*, because it had long been foreseen by him and expected.”¹ On his appearing before the commissioners, and their tendering to him the oath, he told them that he was content to be sworn to that part of it which concerned the succession ; that he doubted not but that the prince of any realm, with the assent of his nobles and commons, might appoint for his succession royal, such an order as seemed most agreeable to his wisdom, but as to the other parts of the oath, he could not swear to them, because his conscience would not suffer him so to do.²

¹ Dr. Hall.

² Lewis's *Life of Fisher*, Ed. Turner, Vol. II., p. 135.

The commissioners pressed him hard to say what his scruples were, and what he had to except against those other parts of the oath, but this he absolutely refused to do. On which said Cranmer—

“It must needs be the diminution of the authority of the Bishop of Rome, or else the reprobation of the King’s first pretended marriage, which is the true cause of your refusal.”

The Act of Succession established the crown on the children born of Anne Boleyn, declared Henry’s first marriage void, and taught that no power on earth could dispense within the degrees prohibited in the Book of Leviticus.

This act, the approval of which was inserted in the oath, did not rest with the succession only, to that either Fisher or More would have sworn. It came within scope of the civil power. To the other, which was of a theological nature, they both refused to subscribe.

It was most insidiously worded, and was as follows :—
“Ye shall swear to bear faith, truth, and obedience alonely to the King’s Majesty, and to the heirs of his body of his most dear and entirely-beloved lawful wife, Queen Anne, begotten and to be begotten. And, further, to the heirs of our said Sovereign Lord, according to the limitation in the statute for surety of his succession in the crown of the realm mentioned and maintained, and not to any other within the realm, *nor foreign authority nor potentate*. And in case any oath be made, or hath been made, by you to any person or persons, that then ye repute the same as vain and annihilate. And that to your cunning, wit, and utter-

most of your power without guile, or fraud, or other undue means, ye shall observe, keep, maintain, and defend the said Act of Succession."

It was utterly impossible for any man to doubt that these words were meant to convey a formal abjuration of the Pope's authority. He was the only "foreign authority," and this was henceforth to be esteemed "vain and annihilate".¹ Fisher and More at once realised the difficulty of their situation, and though they could in conscience have sworn to the succession, it was impossible they could receive the oath with the clauses which were so insidiously interwoven therein.

"Verily," said More, "as to swearing to the succession I see no danger. My conscience so moved me that, though I would not deny to swear to the succession, yet to the oath I could not swear without jeopardy to my soul."

On the bishop's refusal to take the oath in the very terms in which it was conceived, he was allowed a few days to consider of it, and during this time the King advised with his counsel what was best to be done with him. Several of the bishop's friends likewise embraced this opportunity to visit and take leave of him, amongst them being the masters and fellows of Christ's and S. John's College, to which the bishop had been so fast a friend. Their commission was to desire his confirmation of their statutes, which he had drawn out long before, by putting his seal to them, but before he would do that, he desired to have some time to consider them, on which they replied—

¹ Rev. J. Morris, S.J., *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, p. 12.

"Alas, we fear your lordship's time is now too short to read them before you go to prison."

"No matter," replied he, "I will read them in prison." And on their demurring and saying he would hardly be allowed to do it there, he answered —

"Then God's will be done, for I shall hardly be drawn to put my seal to that which I have not well considered. However, if the worst should happen, there is Mr. Cooper, who hath a copy of the same statutes which I have ; if I do not, or cannot, according to my desire, peruse them, I will give it you under my seal, that, if you like them, *that* shall be to you a confirmation, for I am persuaded that one time or other those statutes will take place."

Those statutes seem to be those of the college, of which there is now remaining an original under the bishop's seal, so that it is to be supposed they were afterwards confirmed by him in the Tower. However, to show that the bishop was gifted with the spirit of prophecy, this Master Cooper, long after the imprisonment and death of the bishop and the change and alteration of the times which had made religion, lords, and laws anew, committed this book of statutes to the custody of one Thomas Wilson, who was afterwards master of St. John's College and Bishop of Lincoln, and, as the bishop foretold, he restored them to the house, who admitted them as their only laws, whereby they were wholly governed during the reign of Queen Mary.¹

On his next appearance before the commissioners,

¹ Dr. Hall.

he acquainted them that he had perused the oath with full deliberation, but, as they had framed it, he could not with a safe conscience subscribe to it, unless they gave him leave to alter it in a few particulars, whereby his own conscience might be better satisfied, the King pleased, and his actions rather justified and warranted by law.

The commissioners at once replied that the King would not allow that the oath should admit any exceptions or alterations whatsoever, and Cranmer exclaimed that he must answer directly whether he would or would not subscribe. To which the bishop replied—

“If you will needs have me answer directly, my answer is, that forasmuch as my own conscience cannot be satisfied, I absolutely refuse the oath.”¹

This was on the 26th of April, and he was at once committed to the Tower.

It was about this time that Cranmer wrote a letter to Cromwell, in which he tells him that it seemed to him “that if he and Sir Thomas, who was of the same opinion as the bishop in this matter, did obstinately persist in their sentiments of the preamble of the act, so as not to swear to *that*, it, however, should not be refused them, if they would be sworn to the very act of succession, provided they should be sworn to maintain the same against all foreign powers and potentates. For this will be a means to satisfy the Princess Dowager and the Lady Mary, who thought at present that they should damn their souls if they abandoned and relinquished their estates and degrees. It would likewise put to

¹ Dr. Hall.

silence the Emperor and their other friends if they gave as much credence to the bishop when he spoke and acted against them as they had done when he went with them, and perhaps it would quiet and satisfy many others within this realm if such men as the bishop and Sir Thomas should swear that the succession comprised within the act is good and according to God's laws, for then he believed there would not be one in the kingdom that would say anything about it. And whereas there were several who either would not or could not alter their opinions of the King's first pretended marriage, or of the authority of the Bishop of Rome, yet if all the realm with one accord would acknowledge the succession, it was a thing to be embraced, and the oaths and consent of these two prisoners might not a little avail in their adherents."¹

To this proposal, however, Cromwell refused to accede.

¹ See Letter to Cromwell in Strype's *Cranmer*.





CHAPTER XV.

IN THE TOWER.



HAT gloomy remembrances of the past do not these words chosen for the heading of our chapter call up. Who can pass up Tower Hill and gaze on the walls of the grey old fortress and not feel at least a momentary depression when memory, as with an enchanter's wand, carries him back to the scenes of other days.

Visit the precincts of the Tower when the tumult of the day is over, when the darkness of night, so impressive in a great city, has wrapped it in its sable mantle, when wharves, and warehouses, and the busy marts of commerce are closed, when the late constant tread of the wayfarer is heard but at intervals, or when the hush of the short hours of the night, so much more impressive than midnight itself, has settled for a brief space over the busy metropolis.

There is something peculiarly solemn in this stillness, broken though it may sometimes be by a nocturnal brawl, for it follows closely on the tumult which prevails for some time after the clocks of the city churches have tolled the hour of twelve.

Wander thither when the moon is up, when the broad waters of the Thames shine like a mirror beneath its rays, when the ancient fortress with its grey walls, its towers, buttresses, and loopholes are flooded with its light, let us gaze on the massive structure, and we needs must think of the dark deeds that have been done within its walls.

Or turn your steps thither when no friendly moon, nor glittering star lights up the firmament of heaven, there stands the ancient keep looming darkly against the sky; you will shudder if you ponder over the atrocities that have been committed within its walls.

Its exterior but little altered, needs no aid from the imagination to fill up the outlines present to the mind's eye. It is true the waters which once filled the moat no longer splash against its ponderous walls, but Traitor's Gate, the water-way for the prisoners to the Tower, brings before our mind's eye the forms of many a hapless victim of treachery and wrong, and we can almost imagine we behold the saintly Fisher, with pale face and emaciated form tottering up the steps beyond the arch, leaning on his staff for support, as he is conducted by the warder to his future prison in the Bell Tower.

And the awful words of the poet recur to our minds,

*Abandon every hope ye who enter here.*¹

Very near the Bishop is the spot on which two short years later, and but three after her brows had been encircled with the crown matrimonial, the miserable

¹ *Abbandonata ogni speranza voi chi vi entrate.*—Dante's inscription over the gates of the *Inferno*.

Anne Boleyn, who sinned so deeply for this shining bauble, was to lose her head on the Tower Green.

The Bishop of Rochester and Sir Thomas More were ever the fast friends of her betrayed Mistress, the repudiated Catherine, and had brought upon themselves the anger of her rival by persistently setting their faces against the king's divorce, and doubtless her resentment had had much to do in the sacrifice of the lives of men so venerated as these.

And Fisher is left in his lonely prison without a friend to cheer his drooping spirits; but we would recall our words for he is treading in the path of duty, and for present suffering patiently borne, he sees in the future a crown of fadeless glory awaiting him.

On the 23rd of November, the Parliament again met by prorogation, the session lasting but 15 days, the oath tendered to the Bishops, and taken by many who objected that it was not according to law, was now ratified, and thus the Bishop of Rochester's imprisonment was voted good and lawful, and his refusal to take the oath was certified unto the King's Bench, where he was found guilty.

Sir Richard Morrison of the King's Privy Chamber was then sent with other officers to Rochester to seize whatever the Bishop possessed for the King's use, and taking possession of the Bishop's palace, they turned out all the servants he had left to keep the house in his absence. His noble library of books which he had collected at a vast expense was carried away in large carts, of which there were no less than thirty-two, and many of the books were stolen or injured. Not content with this,¹

¹ Hall's *Life of Bishop Fisher*, C. 19.

they took out of a chest, on the inside of the cover of which was written in old English characters *Let no man offer to lay hands on this, for it is the Church's Treasure*, the sum of £300 which was given by one of the Bishop's predecessors, to remain as a depositum for ever to the said See of Rochester, in the custody of the Bishop for the time being, against any accident or occasion that might happen to the bishopric. To this sum, the Bishop had added another hundred pounds of his own, which he had placed in a bag, out of the mouth of which hung a label with the inscription *Tu quoque fac simile*. But the Commissioners swept it all away.

Among other things, there stood in the Bishop's oratory, a coffer strongly bound with iron hoops, and double locked. Therefore, in order that the counting of the treasure supposed to be contained therein might be attested by several, witnesses were called to be present at its opening.

With much pains and difficulty they at last wrenched it open, but lo, instead of gold and silver, nothing but a shirt of hair, and two or three whips wherewith the saintly and mortified prelate was wont to chastise his body, were to be found therein.

When this, with the other proceedings of the Commissioners, was told to the Bishop in the Tower, he said he was very sorry for their finding these things, but if haste had not made him forget them as well as many other things, they should not have been found there at that time.

Of his library, household goods, and furniture, the good bishop had, as we have said before, long since

made and executed a deed of gift to the college of S. John's in Cambridge. But having inserted a clause in the deed reserving them to himself during his life, they were adjudged to be within the compass of the act, as being in his possession, and were all forfeited to the King. The aged prelate was at once reduced to the greatest poverty and distress.

The same thing happened to More, he lost all he possessed except a portion he had set aside for Margaret Roper and her husband, he giving the same to them at once in possession, and by so doing they were enabled to keep it. In his own case the lands reserved for himself during life, and thus assured as he thought to his wife and children, were taken from them and given up to the King.





CHAPTER XVI.

A NOBLE LETTER FROM S. JOHN'S COLLEGE.



THE Bishop was a man on whom imprisonment was likely to produce the worst effects, for his whole life had been passed in constant occupation and activity. Here he was deprived of the solace of his beloved books, those speechless friends which had been the charm of his existence, and unlike Sir Thomas who was cheered with the visits of the inimitable Margaret Roper, he was thrown entirely on himself.

Whilst he was enduring this imprisonment, the Master and Fellows of S. John's College sent him the following noble letter of condolence which ran as follows :—

“To the Reverend Father in Christ, the Lord Bishop of
Rochester.

“Amidst your great occupations about the flock committed to you by God, the high labours you sustain in defence of Christ's religion, and your assiduous Meditations in the Law of the Lord, amidst your prayers, reading, and writing, and bitter and troublesome cares

and afflictions, will you vouchsafe to read your children's letter, which indeed is written, more because we are ashamed to be silent, than that we know what is fit for us to say.

"We judge it base and wicked in the present state of affairs not to signify our affection and declare our devout solicitude on your behalf, for, when all who are honoured with the Christian name, or love their country, lament at this time your poverty and distress, we should be very ungrateful, nay, unable to support and maintain the reputation of piety, if we were not much tormented with the adversity that has befallen you, and felt not the greatest grief; but although we much lament that you have fallen into the perils of these times which the Divine wrath has raised, grief has not wholly taken possession of our minds; so far from it that even from thence we feel a joy, and after we heard of the afflictions with which you were visited, contrary passions of joy and sorrow divided our minds. For it cannot be but that on hearing of anything perilous having happened to you, that struck with the bitter tidings we are affected with a lively grief, whilst on the other hand, calling to mind that it is a great mark of the Divine favour to suffer tribulation for righteousness sake, our minds are filled with joy because we clearly understand what indeed we never doubted, that you have rather pleased God than man, this is what we ask of God in our daily prayers for you, that He will have you for His own, that He will most plentifully fill you with His graces, and copiously impart to you His Holy Spirit. But truly *you* have no need of *our* comforting you under your afflic-

tions if we were capable of doing it, since you having fallen into trouble for righteousness sake, who are so holy a bishop, and constantly tread in the steps of Christ and His Apostles, it must of itself produce an unspeakable consolation, full of a secret pleasure, and from a consciousness of your own sincerity, and whatever examples there are which may be brought forward to confirm and strengthen your patience, no mortal man ever better knew or remembered them, so that it is superfluous and even ridiculous for us even to trouble you with our words of consolation, and like a child who can scarce speak, offering to tell his father how he should express himself.

“Our duty, therefore, is daily to be as we are, constant in prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ, that He will keep you safe for His Church who are so enriched with the treasures of His grace, so that if affliction caused by either bodily weakness or outward worldly difficulties be sent to you from God, Christ will turn it to you for good, for we own we are obliged to you for so many favours that we are not able to rehearse them all, or to express them in words.

“You are our father,” they continue ; “our preceptor and legislator, and, last of all, our exemplar, or original of virtue and holiness. To you we acknowledge that we owe our food and learning, and whatsoever we either have or know that is good for anything. But we have nothing wherewith we may return the favour or repay the kindness, besides our prayers, wherewith we continually apply ourselves to God in your behalf. However, whatever wealth we have in common, or what estate

the college has, if we spent it all in your cause, we should not yet equal your beneficence towards us. We, therefore, entreat you to use whatever is ours as your own, for whatever we have is and shall be yours; nay, even we ourselves are wholly at your disposal. For you are our glory, our defence, and our head, so that of necessity whatever evils befall *you*, their bitterness must be felt by *us*, who are members in subjection to you, and may the kind and merciful God ward off all evils from you, and of His goodness always increase to you His blessing. And should anything intervene which, in the judgment of this world, seems harsh and severe, may God make it soft and easy, pleasant, and even honourable to you, as He has changed the odium and ignominy of the Cross into the highest glory and reputation. And we all pray that our Lord Jesus Christ will not leave you destitute of the comfort of His holy Spirit, in whom you may be happy for ever. Farewell, most reverend father."

Such a noble letter as the above must needs have given the greatest consolation to the bishop, but we glean from the author,¹ from whose pages we have extracted it, that he made no use of this generous offer on the part of the college, very probably from fear of bringing them into trouble with the King, did it come to his ears that they were befriending him in his necessity.

¹ Lewis's ed., Turner, Vol. II., p. 151.



CHAPTER XVII.

WITH THE LORDS OF THE COUNCIL.



URING his confinement the bishop was often visited by the Lords of the Council. Their first visit was made apparently for the purpose of giving him a chance of recanting his refusal to take the oath of succession, and occurred about the 1st of May, 1534, the day after which, according to the second act of attainder against him, the oath was tendered to him for the last time.

On one of these visits, they urged him sorely to take the oath, and told him that Sir Thomas More, by whose persuasion he had stood out so stiffly, had now shown him the way, and they expected him to do no other than follow the good example he had given him.

The bishop seemed to be very much troubled and sorrowful for More's sake.

"My lords," said he, coming to himself after a while, "I confess I am not a little perplexed at what you tell me, which is no more than I have heard already, I am exceedingly sorrowful that that courage should now be wanting to him, which I once thought would never have failed him, and that constancy had not been another

addition to all his great and singular virtues, but I am not a fit man to blame him, for I was never assaulted by those strong temptations (meaning wife and children,) which it seems have at last overcome him; however, because you say I depend on his judgment, and stood out by his persuasions, I know not how better to let you know you were deceived with that opinion, than to let you see how I now stand to the same ground on my own legs, I tell you plainly concerning the oath that as I will not say anything against it, so I cannot in any wise possibly take it, except I should make shipwreck of my soul and conscience, and then were I fit to serve neither God nor man.”¹

After this visit of the lords he was kept more closely in his cell, to which he was again remanded.

It must have been very shortly after Fisher had been thus molested that Margaret Roper was deceived by Audley, by the assertion that the Bishop had taken the oath.

Stokesley, Bishop of London, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Tunstal, Bishop of Durham, were then sent to him to see what they could do with him. The first named prelate, indeed, was often heard to lament later that he had not held out with Fisher.

How little did these men then think that after the Bishop's death this question of supremacy would be so exercised that the very doctrines of their faith would be altered, and that in the next reign they would be deprived of their dignities and be confined in the same prison, where for five years they lived in expectation of

¹ Dr. Hall's *Life of Fisher*.

that martyrdom which might expiate the errors which fear had led them into, but from which they were released in the reign of Mary, and many times they were heard to accuse themselves, even when in the pulpit, of the delusions into which they had fallen at that time.

“My Lords,” said Fisher, after they had each in his turn sought to make him yield to their false reasoning, “it doth not so much grieve me to be urged so sorely in a business of this nature, as it doth wound me that I should be urged by you whom it concerns as much as me. Alas ! I do but defend your cause, whilst you so plead against yourselves ; it would better become us all to cling together in repressing the injuries which are inflicted on the Church, than thus divided amongst ourselves to help on the mischief, but I see judgment is begun in the house of God, and if we fall I have no hope that the rest will stand. You see we are besieged on every side, and the fort is betrayed by those who should defend it, and since we have made no better resistance we are not the men to see an end of these calamities ; wherefore I pray you to leave me to Almighty God, in whom alone there is comfort which no man can deprive me of, and for that you have often told me of the King’s heavy displeasure against me, I pray you remember me to him, and tell him I had rather exercise my duty in praying for him than in pleasing him in this matter.”¹

And seeing they could in no way move him to their purpose, with heavy hearts and sad countenances, these vacillating Bishops left him, and never again approached him. Fear had thoroughly awed them and brought them

¹ *Vide* Dr. Hall.

into utter subjection to the will of the despot. But there can be no room for doubt that the absolute refusal of holy Bishop Fisher not to yield one iota of the Church's rights to the grasp of Henry, made them feel the immeasurable distance between him and themselves—he so brave and fearless, they so yielding and timid.

Well and truly might he say that the fort was betrayed by those who were its natural defenders. With the spirit of prophecy, he foretold the evils which were about to overwhelm the Church, and probably felt that, had his brother prelates banded together to resist firmly the King's encroachments, Henry, tyrant as he was, must in the end have yielded.

But in a corner of the apartment had stood the faithful serving-man of the Bishop. He had overheard the whole conversation, and when they had departed, he exclaimed :

“Alas, my Lord, why should you stick with the King any more than the rest of the Bishops, all of whom are learned and godly. He requires of you only but that you would say he is head of the Church, and methinks that is no great matter, for your lordship may still think what you please.”

This speech caused the Bishop to laugh right heartily, at which, taking renewed courage, the poor fellow continued to persuade him in a yet more serious manner, to whom he replied :—

“Tush, tush, Wilson, thou art playing the fool. I know well how much thou lovest me, and that thou sayest this out of simplicity and love ; but I tell thee it is not for the supremacy alone I am uneasy and disquieted, but for another oath [meaning the oath of

succession], which, if I would have sworn unto, I believe I should never have been much questioned about the supremacy. Nor is it for these alone I stand out, but for the flood of evils that must overwhelm the realm and that must necessarily follow. This thou mayest say thou hast heard me speak when I am dead and gone."





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TWO CAPTIVES.



FEW indeed amongst those who then sat in the high places could be weighed in the scales of the sanctuary and not be found wanting.

Very few had the imperishable gold in their characters without an accompanying amount of hay and stubble. Had this not been the case, far different would have been the result of the voluptuous Monarch's effort to cast the Church as a bondsmaiden at the feet of her enemies. Yet there were a few brave souls whose courage was tested as was that of Fisher, and More, (we allude to the Fathers of the Chapter-house) of whom we shall speak briefly in a subsequent chapter.

Like the bishop and Sir Thomas, they lost their lives because they would not deny the supremacy of the Holy See. Like them, though some of the Protestant historians try to conceal the fact, they died because they would not own the King as supreme head of the Church in England.

Month after month wore slowly away to the saintly bishop, whose imprisonment had from the first been far more rigorous than was that of More. Nevertheless

through the fidelity of his serving-man, the two friends managed at times to elude the watchfulness of their gaolers, and to exchange letters with each other.

We have already adverted to the fact that when before the Lords of the Council, Fisher had been led to believe that More had taken the oath, and in like manner the Lords of the Council endeavoured to cheat More into the belief that Fisher had taken it.

One morning, Margaret Roper, on her way to the Council Chamber, was met by Audley, who said to her—

“Your father is much to be blamed. Fisher resembled him, but he has become wiser and taken the oath.”

“Are you quite sure of it, my lord?” said Margaret, giving a spring for joy.¹

“Yes, I am quite certain of it. The bishop is now with the King, and will soon be restored to liberty and favour.”

A few moments more and Margaret stood before her father, her usual grave demeanour less composed, for her face was now radiant with delight. And said she—

“Father, my lord of Rochester has taken the oath.”

“Silence, daughter,” exclaimed the astonished More; “it is not possible.”

“But the Lord Chancellor hath but just told me so.”

“Away, away, thou foolish one,” said her father, who at once detected the snare that was laid for him; “thou art not used to their tricks. But understand, Margaret, an’ the bishop *had* done so, it would be no precedent for me.”

¹ Roper's *Life of More*.

Before very long, however, the communication between the two captives was detected, and the faithful servant, Wilson, who had carried the letters to and fro, was put into close confinement, and even threatened with death. But he is said to have asked with such an air of perfect simplicity, if a new statute had been made to hang a servant for serving his master, that he was set free on condition that he should not be the bearer of any more letters.

More had refused to give any credence to the story respecting Fisher having taken the oath when Margaret had told him of it, but he mused over the matter when alone, and when called before the commissioners, on their repeating it to him with the most unblushing effrontery, he asked to speak with the bishop, and was told he should do so as soon as he had himself taken it.

"Let me but see his signature, my lords," was More's next request, to which the Lord Chancellor replied "that it had been sent to the King".

"Let me, then, candidly express mine own opinion, my lords," said More. "I will tell you once for all, that I do not believe my Lord of Rochester has either subscribed his hand or taken the oath, *and, if he has done so, I can do neither.*"

He was at once remanded to his cell. The indignation of the commissioners had been more than usually excited by the calm persistence exhibited by More.

Thus they tried the constancy of both these illustrious captives, leading each to suppose the other had subscribed to it. What would not King Henry have given could he but have brought them both to own him as head of the Church.

Meanwhile the rigour of the bishop's captivity grew daily more excessive, the winter was drawing on, and his prison lodging in the Tower lacked a cheerful fire, whilst he, as himself pitifully narrates, was left almost without food and raiment. And yet this aged man had been the dearly-beloved preceptor of the King, the esteemed friend of his deceased father, and the venerated adviser and confessor of his grandmother, who on her death-bed bequeathed the inexperienced and youthful Henry to his watchful care.

But when did Henry spare woman or man in his sensuality or wrath. Let us remember too the age and infirmity of the prisoner who was thus ruthlessly abandoned by the pitiless King; but his own words will speak far better than any description of ours, and an autograph letter, written from the Tower towards the Christmas of the first year of his imprisonment, will tell its own tale.

Bitterly must a man like Bishop Fisher have deplored the weakness, nay the sinfulness of men clad in his priestly garments, who, had they all stood firm against the King's encroachments on the rights and liberties of the Church, would have presented so formidable an array that his tyrannical attempt, his greed of power, his thirst for wealth, his desire to subject the ecclesiastical beneath the kingly rule, would have been frustrated in the outset.

But fear had paralysed them all. They counted the odds against them, and doubtless dread of the axe or halter led them to forget the trite old axiom that "union is strength," and so they fell who had been placed on the watch tower as a beacon to others whose guides they

were, but guides no longer as in earlier days, for example is of more value than precept, as the saintly bishop had clearly set forth in his speech in which he addressed the synod, given in a previous chapter.

And so it was that the timid, the lukewarm, the positively cold and lax in faith and holy living, fell away beneath the royal despot's power, and became the loyal servants of his will, at least outwardly, though there were doubtless others like Stokesley and Tunstall, who in their hearts retained the old allegiance, and inwardly scorned the anomalous position now claimed by the King. Small wonder though that they yielded, when so few stood firm, nor did they feel themselves endued with the courage of the martyr, for they knew well that in the Tower lay incarcerated for life, nay, awaiting their possible condemnation to death, two men of which any realm in Europe would have been justly proud to rank amongst her sons ; men renowned too for all scholarly attainments, marvels of the age in which they lived ; men of exalted virtue, the one as a layman, the other a distinguished ecclesiastic ; men who had enjoyed the favour of the King, nay, his affection, for had he not boasted that there was no prelate equal to my Lord of Rochester, no lay councillor so worthy of renown as Sir Thomas More ?

And More, with his keen perception of the monarch's character, had shrewdly remarked when on one occasion his son-in-law, Roper, had spoken to him of the delight the King took in More's society, and his evident partiality for him.

"I feel his Grace is my very good lord, son Roper,

and I believe he doth as singularly favour me as any within his realm. Howbeit, I may tell thee, I have no cause to be proud, for if my head would win him a castle in France it would not fail to go."

The above remark, mentioned by Roper himself in his life of Sir Thomas, speaks volumes for his penetration. He had many opportunities in the freedom of unrestricted intercourse he had enjoyed, in seeing the King when he was off his guard and not endeavouring to veil his real disposition, and could see that beneath all his suave affability there lurked such selfishness and cruelty that, were he once seriously thwarted, the natural ferociousness of his disposition would break through all restraint, and crush, like a mighty avalanche, all that lay in its way.

The meek and holy bishop had doubtless had fewer opportunities, as well as perhaps less discernment in the gift of reading characters than Sir Thomas, whose lot had been cast in the world. His life as a prelate of the Church had been spent in such strict observance of his duties, that, after Henry had reached the years of manhood, he must have visited the Court less frequently. Indeed, in one of the addresses we have quoted from Dr. Hall's old work, he speaks regretfully of being summoned to attend the Court, when he should rather be engaged in his duties as a bishop, so that he would necessarily have had far fewer opportunities of reading the real character of the king, who resembled, when irritated by opposition, a tiger sheathing its talons beneath a velvet paw before taking a leap which is to bring with it destruction and death.

The heroic bishop's life presents a record of unbroken piety. In season and out of season, he came forth to preach. He stemmed, as far as was in his power, the plague-spot of schism, that grew into one vast heresy, which has robbed the land for more than three centuries of England's ancient heritage, her grand old faith, and which, like a hydra-headed monster, has given birth to sects innumerable, to the extravagance and follies of the wildest fanaticism, to phrensy, under the sacred name of religion, in this our own day, with which it is disgraceful, nay blasphemous to couple the name of the Redeemer, whose disciples these Sectarians call themselves, shoots from Protestantism which have sprung out of the pride of the fiery Martin Luther, as numerous as there are days in the year; and a melancholy thought it is that had there been more men like Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher, King Henry's vagaries had been arrested at their outset, and never would heresy have been thus rampant in England.





CHAPTER XIX.

A LETTER FROM THE TOWER.



THE following letter is exceedingly touching ; every word shows the straits to which the prelate was now reduced.¹

“ RIGHT WORSHIPFUL,

“ After my most humble commendations, whereas ye be content that I should wryte unto the King’s Highness, in good faythe I dread me that I cannot be so circumspect in my wrytynge but that some worde should escape me, wherewith his Grace shal be moved to some further displeasure agaynst me, whereof I would be very sorry, for, as I will answer before God, I would not in any manner offend his Grace, my duty saved unto God, whom I must in everything prefer, and, for this consyderation, I am full loth and full of fere to wryte unto his Highness in this matter. Nevertheless, sithen (since) I conceyve that it is your mynd that I should do so, I will endeavor me to the best that I can. But, first, I must beseche you, good Mr. Secretarye, to call to your remembrance that at my last being before you and the other commissioners for taking the oath concernying the King’s most noble succession, I

¹ Cott MS., *Cleopatra E.*, VI., fol. 172, Autograph.

did repete this reason which I said moved me : I doubted not but that the prynce of any realm, with the assent of his nobles and commons, might appoynt for his succession royal such an order as was seen unto his wysdom most accordyng, and, for this reason, I said I was content to be sworn unto that part of the oath concernyng the succession.

“ This is a very truth, as God help my soul at my utmost need. Albeit, I refused to swear to some other parcels (matters), because my conscience would not serve me so to do. Furthermore, I beseche you, Mr. Secretarye, to be good unto me in my necessity, for I have nather sheets nor yet other clothes that are necessary for me to wear but that are ragged and rent too shamefully. Notwithstandyng, I myght easily suffer that, if they would keep my bodye warm. But my dyete also, God knows, how slender it is at many tymes. And now in myn age my stomach may not always do but with a few kinds of meatts, which, if I want, I decay forthwith, and fall into coaffes (coughs) and diseases of my bodye, and cannot keep myself in health.

“ And, as our Lord knoweth, I have nothyng left unto me to provyde any better, but as my brother of his own purse layeth out for me to his great hynderance.

“ Wherefore, good Mr. Secretarye, eftsone, I beseche you to have some pittie upon me, and let me have such things as are necessary for me in myn old age, and especially for my health, and also that it may please you by your hygh wysdom to move the King’s Hyghness to take me unto his gracyous favor agane, and to restore me unto my lyberty out of this cold and paynful im-

prisonment, whereby ye shall bynd me to be your poor beadsman for ever unto Almighty God, who ever have you in his protection and custody. Other twayne things I must also desire of you, one that it may please you that I may have some priest with me in the Tower, by the assignment of Mr. Lieutenant, to hear my confession agaynst this holy tyme; the other that I may borrow some books to stir my devocyon more effectually these holy days for the comfort of my soul. This, I beseech you to grant me of your charity, and the Lord send you a merry christmas and a comfortable one to your hearty desire. At the Tower, the xxii day of December."

One would think that so pitiful a letter would have softened any heart not absolutely steeled to the dictates of humanity, but Cromwell was not to be moved. The request of the bishop was not complied with, no priest was allowed to visit him, and the glad feast of the Nativity was passed by the aged prelate in the solitude of his prison lodging in the Tower.

The Bishop's wretched condition and straitened means during his severe confinement speak but ill for the humanity of Master Lieutenant, for a pound a week, which was the sum allowed for his maintenance, should at least have supplied him with the common necessities of life.

"To one of those fortunate accidents which have handed down to us so many of the ephemeral papers and memoranda of by-gone days, which would seem from their very nature to have been most liable to destruction, we are indebted for the preservation of an account of the weekly sums allowed for his support and that of his

fellow sufferer, Sir Thomas More, while in confinement, it occurs in a paper entitled *The Charges of certain persons in the Towre.*"¹

¹ Lewis, Ed., Turner.—The Byschope of Rochester for xiiijth monthys after xx, s, le weke—lvj., ii.

Sir Thomas More for iijth monthis, unpayd after x, s, le weke, and his ser̄vaint v, s, le weke—ix, li.

Mr. Turner remarks that "after all Fisher was better off than More, who was allowed five shillings a week less and had a servant to keep," but doubtless the admirable Margaret Roper materially aided her father during his imprisonment.





CHAP. XX.

THE CARTHUSIANS.



T the end of the year 1534, the Convocations of Canterbury and York had tried to serve God and Mammon by asserting the King's supremacy *quantum per Dei legem licet*.

The Parliament which met early in 1535 swept away their feeble protest, and first enacted the King's highness to be supreme head of the Church in England, and then, that if any person after the first day of February next coming did maliciously will, wish, or desire by words or writing to deprive the King, Queen, &c., of their dignity, title, or name of their royal estates, every such person should be adjudged a traitor.¹

These are the Acts of Parliament under which Fisher, More, and the seven Carthusians suffered martyrdom.

Now, concerning the latter, we feel we needs must say a few words, we may not pass by unnoticed all mention of the holy martyrs who suffered because they had said, "The King, our Sovereign Lord, is not Supreme Head of the Church in England".

¹ *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers*, ed. John Morris, p. 14.

The priors of Beauvale and Eppworth being at the Charterhouse on a visit, it was resolved that they, with Prior Houghton, should forestall the arrival of the Commissioners, by going themselves to Cromwell, the King's vicar. The result of this was simply their committal to Newgate, followed by their trial, conviction, and martyrdom on the 4th of May, 1535. Roper, in the Life of his martyred Father-in-Law, relates that "as Sir Thomas More, in the Tower, chanced on a time, looking out of his window, to behold one Master Reynolds, a religious, learned, and virtuous father of Sion, and three monks of the Charterhouse, for the matter of the supremacy and matrimony, going out of the Tower to execution, he, as one longing on that journey to have accompanied them, said unto my wife, Margaret Roper, then standing beside him: 'Lo, dost thou not see, Meg, that these blessed Fathers be even as cheerfully going to their death as bridegrooms to their marriage. Wherefore, thereby mayest thou see, my own good daughter, what a great difference there is between such as have in effect spent all their days in a strait, hard, penitential, and painful life religiously, and such as have, as thy poor father hath done, consumed all their time in pleasure and ease licentiously. For God, considering their long-continued life in most sore and grievous penance, will no longer suffer them to remain here in this vale of misery and iniquity, but speedily hence take them to the fruition of his everlasting Deity, whereas thy silly father, Meg, like a most wicked caitiff, hath passed forth the whole course of his miserable life most sinfully, God thinking him not worthy so soon to come to that eternal felicity, leaveth

him here yet still in the world, further to be plagued and tormented with misery.'"

The holy martyrs, whose cheerful bearing and happy end aroused the brave old Chancellor's holy envy, were Richard Reynolds, a Monk of Sion House, and three Carthusians—John Houghton, Prior of the London Charter-House; Augustine Webster, a Monk of Sheen, Prior of the House of Visitation, near Eppeworth, in the Isle of Axholm; and Robert Lawrence, Prior of Beauvale, in Nottinghamshire. Fortunately for their name, the original indictment is still extant¹ on which they were convicted, so that the cause of their death cannot be doubted.

They suffered, as we said at the commencement of this chapter, because they would not declare the King to be supreme head of the Church of England.

"Three other monks of the Charter-House were hanged, drawn, and quartered, at Tyburn, on the 19th of June, in the same year, and for the same cause, after cruel sufferings in prison."

"In addition to these great martyrs, who gloriously gave their lives sooner than deny the supremacy of Christ's Vicar upon earth, the London Charter-House gave to the Church other heroic souls, who were not less constant in the faith, though it was to an end less conspicuous, though not less trying.

"Simplicity and fervour reigned amongst them. There were thirty professed fathers and eighteen lay brothers, out of whom five went astray in these troublous times.

¹ Third Report of Deputy-Keeper of Public Records, App., p. 237.

In all, the Carthusian order gave to God eighteen English martyrs, the last of them languishing for four years in prison, and being hanged, drawn, and quartered in 1541.

“The Charter-House was granted in 1555 to Sir Edward, afterwards Lord North, who made a palace for himself of the convent, turned the chapel into a dining hall, and pulled down most of the cloister ; and subsequently, after thrice changing hands, it was sold in 1611 for £13,000 to Thomas Sutton, the founder of the existing Charter-House Hospital and Schools.

“Such was the end of Sir Walter de Manny’s famous foundation *la salutation Mere Dieu*, the London Charter-House. If the other Religious of England had been as faithful as the Carthusians, Henry VIII. could hardly have succeeded in rooting the monastic life out of the land.”¹

¹ For the above brief notice of the Carthusians and the subsequent remarks, I am indebted to the Rev. John Morris’s work, *Troubles of our Catholic Forefathers, written by themselves*, in which a long and interesting account of the Carthusian Monks and the suppression of their beautiful Charter-House may be seen.





CHAPTER XXI.

LETTERS FROM THE TOWER.



THE following letter from Dr. Rowland Lee, Bishop-elect of Litchfield and Coventry, to Cranmer, after he had visited Fisher in the Tower, will be interesting to the reader :—

“Pleaseth you to be advertised that I have been with my lord of Rochester, who is as ye left him, ready to take the oath of succession, and swear never again to meddle more with the validity of the matrimony, or invalidity with the Lady Dowager ; but that utterly to refuse, for, as for the case of the prohibition Levitical, his conscience is so knit that he cannot cast it from him whatever betide him. And yet he will and doth profess his allegiance to our Sovereign Lord the King during his life. Truly the man is nigh going, and cannot long continue unless the King and his Council be merciful unto him, for the body cannot bear the clothes on his back, as God knoweth, whom preserve you.

“In haste, scribbled by your own most bounden,
“ROWLAND, LITCH ELECTUS.”¹

¹ Strype's *Cranmer*, Appendix.

"This letter shows the nature of the concessions Fisher was willing to make, and presents a striking picture of a man doomed to severe imprisonment. . . ."

Such were his opinions. Now mark, how worthy a victim these lenient men had selected! Fisher's bodily strength disappointed his enemies. They relaxed their vigilance, and resigned the old man to the certain virulence of his persecutors.¹

About this time the Bishop was commanded to reply in writing to some forty questions put to him concerning the divorce.²

By his answers it would seem as if he was asked what letters he had received from abroad about the King's matter, from whom they came, and what were the contents, what he had written, and what communications he had relating to it with Queen Catherine.

"He replied that it was so long since he had received the letters about which he was asked that he had almost forgotten them, and did not remember the writer's name, that he had never since had a letter or message from him, but that he had no reason to doubt that he was one of the princes of Germany, as the messenger said he was. That he had never conversed privately with the Lady Catherine since his Majesty had commanded him to be her counsel. That it was very likely there was a messenger that went betwixt, and who was employed to carry a message to some one of the German princes, but what the message was, or to which of those princes it was sent, unless it was to Ferdinand, who was

¹ Bruce, *Archæologia*, Vol. XXV.

² Lewis Ed. Turner.

now King of Hungary, he protested he did not know. That he was not sure how many letters he had written, but as far as he remembered, he thought about seven or eight, for since the affair itself was of so great concern on account of the excellency of the persons who were interested in it, and the strict injunction given him by his Majesty, he had employed so much labour and diligence to find out the truth, that so he might not deceive himself and others, as he had never in his whole life before used in any other matter, that what was become of those letters he could not tell, having never been solicitous about them, only of the two last written by him, which seemed to him to contain in them the strength of all the former ones, the Lord of Canterbury had one of them. As for the books he was asked about, he had never sent himself, or consented that any one else should send either them, or copies of them beyond the sea, nor that the transcriber of them nor his servant had any of them so far as he knew, nay, that he never so much as intended to send any of them abroad, that it was neither with his advice or persuasion, or with his knowledge, that the little book was published, and that he was altogether ignorant who was the author of it, but, as far as he could guess by the style and manner of writing, it was Cornelius Agrippa."

"As for Abel," the bishop writes, "he never consented that such a book should be set forth by him, but that to his knowledge he never had any book of his."

Being asked as to the messenger sent to him by the Lady Catherine, he replied that he was not in his house half an hour, that he knew nothing of his errand more

than, that, perhaps, she desired it to be known to those princes to whom he was sent, that she had sworn she was never known by the illustrious Prince Arthur, and that he was sure he never gave his advice or consent that the writer mentioned to him should attempt anything with the princes of Germany against the King's cause, and that the messenger was gone from him before he received those letters, that they were sent to him by the Lady Catherine, whose sworn counsellor he was by the King's own command, and that so far as he saw they contained nothing in them beyond what related to the declaration of the virginity of the said Lady Catherine.

“As to the reason of her sending these letters to him, he said he knew of no other than she desired he should know she was not altogether neglected by the grandees of other countries, but by whom they were brought to him he did not remember, since at that time she used to send to him sometimes one and sometimes another, though both then and long before he had forbore to give her any advice unless in some things which pertained to her conscience, that he did not know who wrote the letters, unless it was the hand of Dr. Adeson, his chaplain. That as to George Day, he never found fault with him or any one else, either by letter or word of mouth, for favouring the King's cause, but he remembered that he said, when he heard that Day was of neither opinion, that he disliked him for currying favour on both sides, and that, perhaps on account of his saying so, Day had so industriously purged himself by his letters, but that he might judge of him as he pleased, since he was sure he desired nothing but that truth

might overcome, and that he had never blamed anyone for defending the King's matter, nor persuaded any one to patronise the cause of the Lady Catherine. As to the letter he wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury,¹ he said he did not write it to persuade him to alter his opinion, but only to get him to desist from soliciting him to affirm what was against his conscience, and because he had not vouchsafed by his letters to forewarn him of the business about which he had sent for him, that so he might have been better prepared for making answer to those who were present. But when he came to Knolle,² he prayed his lordship not to suspect that he would sin against the Holy Ghost by either opposing a known truth, or not admitting a truth if it might be demonstrated either by the writings of the universities, or by any others. As to his correspondence with the Lady Catherine, the King, he said, very well knew that she had, by his consent, sent for him more than once, on account of certain scruples which offended her conscience, and that, long before this affair of the divorce was begun, and that for the satisfying those scruples, he not only used many words when he was present with her, but afterwards wrote her several letters, but that he never heard from her either that she despaired of mercy, or that she had committed perjury, and that if he did write the words³ mentioned in the thirty-first interrogatory, he

¹ Warham.

² A seat of the Archbishop's in Kent, now in possession of the Duke of Dorset, to which in the previous year Warham had summoned the Bishop to try if he and they who were with him could convince him of the lawfulness of the King's divorce.—Lewis Ed., Turner Coll., No. 27.

³ What these words were cannot be known for want of the questions

wrote them that he might banish all her scruples of conscience, and wholly establish her mind in the hope and trust of the promises of Christ. As to the book which he wrote against the opinions of the universities concerning the King's marriage, the Bishop said, it was never sent to Paris, for that at the time when the Lady Catherine required it of him, it was scarce half written, as were none of the other things mentioned in the Interrogatorie, sent thither of his own knowledge or assent. That many learned men, and they approved expositors of the Old Testament, have constantly followed this interpretation in their commentaries, viz., that the Levitical prohibition ought to be understood of the brother's being alive, but that although he mentioned a great many in his writings who maintained the said interpretation, he yet did not from them attempt to confirm his opinion in everything, as was abundantly plain from what he had written."

By the above answers we may see that great endeavours were used to bring the bishop to a compliance with the King on account of the great credit and reputation he was in for his learning and piety, in his replies there is the greatest integrity and plainness, all is open and above board, like a man conscious of his own integrity, and who did not affect to appear what he was not, or disguise what he was. But all these attempts to bring the bishop to take the oath failed entirely of success.¹

themselves, for which reason none of the Bishop's answers are so clear as they would otherwise be.

¹ Lewis Ed., Turner, Vol. II., p. 155.

The Bishop and Sir Thomas More had long comforted each other in their most dreary imprisonment, by an interchange of letters, which had by the means of George Gold, a man in the service of the lieutenant, and Wilson, the bishop's man, been carried on with the greatest secrecy from the time they were each confined in the Tower.

Unhappily, however, by some chance, one of these letters was intercepted, and at once carried to the Council, on which the Bishop was examined by Bedyll and Layton, clerks of the Council, on thirty-one Interrogatories in presence of Sir Edmonde Walsingham, lieutenant of the Tower, and sworn *in verbo sacerdotis*, that he would truly answer.¹

“The bishop's answer was to the effect that there had been letters sent to and fro between him and Sir Thomas—four or thereabouts—since they had come to the Tower, but that he did not remember the contents of any of them which he either sent or received before the first being of the council with him; that the first occasion of this writing proceeded from Sir Thomas, who desired to know the effect of the answer which he made to the council in the matter for which he was first committed to the Tower, and accordingly he sent him in a letter, the answer which he made; that soon after, George, the Lieutenant's man, showed him a letter which Sir Thomas had directed to his daughter Margaret Roper to this purpose; that when the council had proposed to him their business with him, he told them he

¹ Cotton, Cleopat, E. vi., fol. 169.

would not dispute the King's title, and that Mr. Secretary gave him good words at his departure, on which he wrote to Sir Thomas to know his answer more clearly, to which he received a letter, but what it was he did not remember."

"Again, three or four days later, the bishop owned to writing a third letter concerning what his brother had told him of the Act for making the denial of the King's supremacy high treason, and, soon after the last visit of the council, he wrote a fourth time in answer to a verbal message which he received from Sir Thomas by the Lieutenant's man ; that the letters he had received were all burnt as soon as he had read them, with the intent that the contents of them should be kept secret if possible, for he was loth to be reproved by Mr. Lieutenant for his breach of promise, that *he would not do that thing for which he might be put to blame* ; but that, if there was more in those letters than he had stated, he was sure it was nothing but exhortations to each other to have patience in their adversities, and to call upon God for grace, and praying for their enemies, and nothing else that could offend any earthly man, and as for any other letters or messages sent from *him* to Sir Thomas, or from Sir Thomas to *him* since that time, he did not remember any ; but, he added, he often wrote letters touching his diet to him that 'provided it, as also to his brother Robert whilst he lived, and, after his death, to Edward, that he wrote likewise a letter to my Lady of Oxford for her comfort, and several to certain of his friends for money to pay Mr. Lieutenant for his diet, being in great need ; and, according to his

request, he received certain sums from those to whom he wrote, but no answers. Only one he received from his friend Erasmus, which his brother Robert showed to Mr. Secretary before he brought it to him."

The consequence of this discovery on the part of the council was, that henceforth the bishop was debarred the use of pens, ink, and paper, together with his books, if indeed he ever had any whilst in the Tower.





CHAPTER XXII.

BEFORE THE COUNCIL.



HE venerable prelate had now passed much more than a year in the Tower. His brother, who appears to have been united to him by the strongest bonds of natural affection, was no more. The hapless Catherine was wearing away her life in solitude, deprived of the society of her daughter, which would have lent a charm to her sad existence. And he had seen, for the last time, his brother prelates, who had come by order of the King as if to tempt him to cast his lot with theirs.

This coming of a new spring had brought no alleviation to the persecuted bishop. He was left almost without food to eat. Sometimes secretly supplied by More with a portion of his own, wine he was never suffered to taste, and his bodily strength daily grew weaker and weaker.

Yet, again and again, were the Lords of the Council empowered to visit the unfortunate prelate to harass him with repeated questions concerning the King's supremacy, to try, in fact, by these, to ensnare the simple-

mind ed Bishop into the utterance of some incautious speech which might draw him into further trouble, should they not be able to procure his submission.

In order to drive him to answer one way or the other, he was finally visited by the lords, who were to warn him of the new statute, and of the penalty of his not obeying it. Sir Thomas had been asked to swear to it, and to answer as to whether he had seen the statute; also, whether he believed it lawfully made or not, and it is highly probable that questions of the same searching nature were made to the bishop.

In the correspondence that had passed between the friends, it appears that More had desired to ascertain what answer Fisher had made to the council, to which the bishop replied that he had made his answer according to the statute which condemned no man but him that spoke *maliciously* against the King's title, and compelled no one to answer the question proposed to him, and that he besought them that he should not be constrained to make further answer than the said statute did oblige. Indeed, to the King's message delivered to him by the lords, the bishop after a pause replied—

“ My lords,¹ you present before me a two-edged sword, for, if I should answer you with a disacknowledgment of the King's supremacy, that would be my death, and, if I should acknowledge the same, contrary perhaps, to my conscience, that would assuredlie be to me worse than death, wherefore, I make it my humble request to you, that you will bear with my silence, for I shall not make any direct answer at all.”

¹ Hall's *Life of Fisher*.

With this reply the lords were nowise satisfied, and, notwithstanding his request, they urged him more and more to answer them direct one way or the other, telling him how displeasing such kind of shiftings, as they termed the bishop's refusal to answer so dangerous a question, would appear to the King, and how much he was already displeased with him on account of his late correspondence by letters with his fellow-prisoner, Sir Thomas More.

"Wherefore," continued Audley, "if you should now thus use him, you would exasperate his grievous indignation against you more and more, and give him cause to think that you deal more stubbornly with him than well becomes the duty of a good subject."

"Truly, my lords," replied the persecuted prelate. "As for the letters which have passed between me and Sir Thomas More, I wish with all my heart they were now to be read, for they would declare more innocence than harm on both sides, the greater part of them being only our encouragements to patience and friendly salutations, though indeed I was a little curious, knowing Sir Thomas's great learning and profound wit, to know the answers he had made to the questions asked him concerning the statute, which answers *he* sent unto me, as I had sent *mine* to Sir Thomas."

"This, I declare," he continued, "on that conscience for which I suffer, and would yet suffer a thousand deaths rather than justify the least untruth, was all the conspiracy that was between us, and as to your telling me the King will be displeased with me for this doubtful answer, as you term it, no man can be more sorry than I

for the King's displeasure, but when the case so stands that I cannot please the King unless I displease Almighty God, I hope his Grace will be well satisfied with my silence."

"And," exclaimed Secretary Cromwell, "wherein should *you* displease Almighty God more than others, who have satisfied the King's desires in this matter."

"Because I know how mine own conscience dictateth to me," replied Fisher, "but I know not how the consciences of others inform them."

"Aye truly," quoth Chancellor Audley, "I doubt not but you can give us some good reasons for it."

"Indeed, my Lord," calmly replied the Bishop, "I think I am able to give your Lordships reasons that perhaps may seem sufficient why my conscience stands affected as it doth, and could be well content that you heard them, could I declare my mind with safety and without offence to his Majesty and his laws."

With this his tormentors ceased to importune the harassed prelate further, but calling for the Lieutenant, they re-delivered him into his custody, strictly charging him that no further conferences or messages should pass betwixt the Bishop and Sir Thomas More or any one else. Wilson, the Bishop's man, had, however, remained behind the door whilst the Council was with the prelate, and afterwards told his master that he had heard in part the answers he had made to them, and the reasons which Mr. Bedyl, their clerk, had given him for acknowledging the King's supremacy.

The Bishop, however, himself said that he did not remember that ever he declared to Wilson, or to any

man, what answer he was disposed to make, whatever communication there was between them about it ; only Wilson read to him the two statutes once or twice, and then he caused them to be burnt, because he thought that if Mr. Lieutenant had found them with him, he would have made much business thereupon.

The Bishop had, however, in his answer to the Lords of the Council, said that they presented him with a two-edged sword, and Sir Thomas having used the same comparison in speaking of the Act for making it treason to deny the King's titles, it was thence inferred that they had together conspired what answers to make. Sir Thomas said on his trial that *his* answer was but conditional ; if it be dangerous either to allow or disallow this statute, it was like a two-edged sword, which cut both ways, and that if the Bishop's answer resembled his own, it proceeded not from any conspiracy or design, but from the likeness of their wit and understanding. When this conversation and its result was reported to the King by the Lords, he flew into a passion, and swore that they were all fools, asking them " if there were not more waies than one to the wood ".¹

They replied that " they had tried all the waies they could think of, and advised him to send to the Bishop some of his own order to see if *they* could persuade him, since, as he insisted so much on his conscience, it was more properly their business to try to satisfy him ; but the King swore that both he and More should acknowledge his title of supreme head, or he would know why they should not, and they should make him do it, or he

¹ Hall.

would see better reasons why they could not than any they had yet given him, wishing them to see his face no more until it were done."

Upon this the Lords were put to their wit's ends, and then it was that they played them one against the other, in order to ensnare them both by deceiving each as to the resolutions the other had come to, and in this point the Bishop had been more credulous than More—for the moment he had believed them,¹ and was troubled for More's sake.

¹ Dr. Hall.





CHAPTER XXIII.

NEITHER JUSTICE NOR MERCY.



BISHOP FISHER could baffle a direct question, but was not proof against artifice. He was brought to the scaffold on the evidence of one Richard Rich.¹

This man was solicitor-general to the King, and "noted for his intrigues, his degrading subserviency, and bold-faced perjury. Though he paved the way to worldly honours, he at the same time secured to his name the everlasting infamy that attaches to it. The refusal of Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher to acknowledge the King's supremacy had irritated the monarch even beyond his usual ferocity, and every attempt had hitherto failed to bring the two contumacious prisoners within the terms of the recent statute, which made it high treason to deny it. Either Rich was known as a fitting instrument to make another trial, or he voluntarily undertook the degrading office. The manner in which he acted towards these good and pious men was exposed on their trials."²

¹ Bruce, *Archæologia*.

² Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*.

About the end of the first week of May, 1535, this ready and unprincipled tool of Cromwell and the King, entered the cell of the death-doomed prelate, for such he already really was, and, with a smile upon his lips, told the bishop that he had been sent to him by the King's express command. "There is no man in his dominions," he continued, "that he looks upon as more able, or upon whose honesty and integrity and upright dealings he can more safely rely, and he bids me tell you to speak your mind out, freely and boldly to me, concerning the matter of supremacy, which the Parliament has recognised as an attribute to royalty, resting on his royal word and the dignity of a king, that, if you should plainly tell him it were unlawful, he would never undertake it; and one thing more he wishes me to acquaint you with, which is, that you may see how far his royal heart and princely inclination is from the exercise of any illegal or unjust jurisdiction, that, if you will but acknowledge his supremacy, you shall yourself be vicar-general over his whole realm, to see that nothing shall be done but what is agreeable to the laws both of God and of man."

"Worthy sir," replied the prelate, "as to his Majesty's commendations, I deserve them not, but I answer freely and fearlessly. That as to this matter of supremacy, I must tell his Majesty, as I have told him before, and so would tell him if I were to die this hour, that it is utterly unlawful. I would not wish him to take it on himself, as he loves his own soul and the good of his posterity. It would be such a precedent that none will follow, and will never leave this land till it lies buried

with the power that first assumed it ; and to what purpose were it to make me his vicar when nothing is more contrary to God's law than that I should be so ? ”

To this remark Rich made no reply, but left the bishop to his own meditations. He was not at all aware that by speaking out his mind he had fallen into a snare purposely laid for him, deceived as he was by the promise of the favour of the King.

Meanwhile Clement VII. was no more, and Paul III. sat on the pontifical throne, and, full of admiration at the heroism and virtue of Bishop Fisher, the pontiff, at a general promotion of cardinals, raised him to the purple.

There are various conflicting statements as to the sentiments of the bishop when made aware that he had been elevated to the rank of cardinal ; one, that he himself swore in a long examination, in which no fewer than thirty interrogatories were put to him, that when he had heard of his elevation he had said that “ if the cardinal's hat were layed at his feet, he would not stoop to pick it up, he did set so little by it,”¹ and Henry is reported to have exclaimed, “ Paul may send him the hat, but I will take care he has never a head to wear it on”. He immediately despatched a messenger to Calais, forbidding the person who was bearing the emblem of his dignity to the Bishop of Rochester to land at Dover.

Then in order to see what impression the tidings would have on the aged prelate, he sent Cromwell to visit him.

“ What would you say, my lord,” said he, “ if I told

¹ Cotton Library, *Cleopatra*, E., V. I., fol. 174.

you the Pope was sending you the hat of a cardinal, would you accept it ?”

“I should consider myself unworthy of it,” replied Fisher ; “but if the Pope were to do such a thing, I should receive it on my bended knees, in token of respect and gratitude”.

“Mother of God,” exclaimed the King, on hearing his reply, “he shall wear it on his shoulders then, for I will leave him never a head to set it on.”¹

By our other authority, we are told in reply to Cromwell’s question, as to whether he would accept the dignity, that he replied in much the same manner.² He knew himself to be so far unworthy of any such dignity that he thought of nothing less ; but, if any such thing should happen, he should improve that favour to the best advantage, and upon that account he would receive the hat upon his knees.³

On hearing which the King exclaimed, “Ay, is he yet so lusty ? Well, let the Pope send him a hat when he will, he shall wear it on his shoulders, for I will leave him never a head to set it on.”

“Some writers who attempt even in these days to palliate the conduct of Henry have feebly endeavoured to show that the government was alarmed by the Pope having raised Fisher to the dignity of the purple, and that it ‘awakened the vengeance of the King, who instantly determined to put him on his trial.’”

“Fisher’s elevation was on the 21st of May, and the

¹ *Biographia Britannica*.

² Tytler, c. 40, p. 344.

³ Dr. Hall.

commission was dated the 12th. Everything marks a leisurely proceeding in a settled and determined course. Indeed no one who considers the manner in which he was tempted by the council, and afterwards betrayed by Rich (as the evidence on the trial will show) into the declaration which was fatal to him, can think that it had not for some time been determined to put him on his trial, but he was not tried till the 17th, and then to the general surprise, five days elapsed before the order arrived for his execution. There was no hurry of alarm in all this. If the desire to get rid of him existed before the court were aware he had been made cardinal, the other question is of minor importance, since it would have been a solecism in the unrelenting character of Henry VIII. if he had paused between the wish to destroy and its accomplishment.”¹

The King ordered a special commission to be drawn up immediately after the visit of Rich, and given to Lord Chancellor Audley, for the trial of both Fisher and More.

Before it took place they were again visited by the council for the last time on the 14th of June. They were asked if they would acknowledge the King as supreme head of the Church, the marriage of the Prince with the Lady Anne as legal, and the union with Catherine as sinful.

To these questions Fisher begged that he might not be driven to answer lest he should fall thereby in danger of the statutes.² Moreover, he replied that he had

¹ *Archæologia*, Vol. XXV., p. 85-6.

² Audin, Vol. II., p. 120.

already declared to the bishops who had visited him in prison, that he was ready to swear to the oath of succession.¹

A writer of our own times, Robert Southey, sees nothing to praise in the heroism of Fisher, whom he regards as an obstinate old man.² Happily, in England the sectarian spirit does not always prevail against the light of truth, it is a Protestant author who hurls at the poet Laureate a generous burst of indignation.³

¹ Audin, Ibid.

² The bishop's persistence in refusing to take the oath was plainly a matter of obstinacy, not of conscience.—Southey's *Book of the Church*.

³ It is a pity that a doctrine so dangerous has so able an advocate.—*Archæologia*, Vol. XXV., p. 68.





CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TRIAL.



IN the indictment drawn up by the King's council, the bishop was accused of having falsely, maliciously, and traitorously desired, imagined, and attempted, seduced by diabolical instigation (the sentiments as well as the wording of the bill are, as a talented French author has truly said, "equally barbarous" ¹) to deprive the King of his royal attributes, that is to say of his title and name of "supreme head of the Church of Englande".

This crime, anticipated by the statute, had been committed in the Tower, on the 7th of May, when "maliciously, traitorously, and falsely," Fisher had said, "The King is not supreme head yn erthe of the Church of Englande".

A little while before he was called up for trial, the Bishop was taken so very ill that it was expected he would have been saved the pain of a violent death, on which the King sent his own physicians to visit and prescribe for him,² when having recovered greater strength and a better state of health, so that he was

¹ Audin.

² Dr. Hall.

thought able to go abroad, he was, on Thursday the 27th of June, brought from the Tower to the Court of King's Bench at Westminster, but far too ill to walk all the way on foot, he rode part of it on horseback, clad in an old black cloth gown, and then took water at the Old Swan, the stairs at the other side of the bridge.

"He was surrounded by a number of men bearing glaives and halberts, bills, and other weapons about him, preceded by the executioner bearing the axe on his shoulder, the edge turned from him, as the manner is."

A touching sight must that have been methinks. For many a weary month he had been confined in the Tower, and now, enfeebled by age, and sickness and trouble, he stands again beneath the clear blue sky, the midsummer sun shining on his now silvery hair, the bright light of day revealing the change those weary months had wrought in this brave confessor of the faith.

And now, leaning on his stick, he totters feebly into Westminster Hall, and is presented at the bar before the commissioners—the atrocious Audley, the time-serving panderer to the King's villanies, Cromwell, Lord Wiltshire, the father of Mistress Anne, and a host besides of those who were his enemies from the very fact, that from the outset he had fought against the divorce which they had all been so eager that the King should obtain.

As less skill was apprehended from the aged prelate in defending himself, and there was a colouring against him from the insidious dealing of the infamous Rich, it was decided to place him on his trial before Sir Thomas More.

"Commanded by the name of John Fisher, late of

Rochester, to hold up his hand, he did so with a most cheerful countenance and uncommon constancy and firmness. Then the indictment which was very long and prolix was read, and he was asked whether he was guilty of this treason, or no? To which he pleaded "Not Guilty".

There was a jury of twelve men, freeholders of Middlesex, appointed to try the case. For a moment silence prevailed, then Rich stepped forward to give evidence against him, that "close and secret Messenger" that had passed between the King and the Bishop, who now deposed upon oath, that he heard the prisoner say in plain words in the Tower of London, that he believed in his conscience, and by his learning he most assuredly knew, that "The Kyng neither was, nor by right *could* be Supreme Hedd yn erthe of the Churche of Englande".

Rich was the only evidence for the crown, and though no one doubted that he had passed the limits of truth in stating what the prisoner had said, Rich covered himself with infamy for basely bringing forward as evidence against the bishop, a private conversation held with him when paying him an apparently friendly visit in the Tower. Too late did the saintly prelate perceive the snare that had been laid for him, and when the false-hearted Rich had given his evidence, so at variance with his conversation in the Tower, he leant upon his stick and his body bent beneath the infirmities of age, said the prelate, "Mr. Rich, I marvel to hear you bear witness against me of these words knowing in what secret manner you came to me; suppose I so said unto you, yet, in that saying I committed no treason; for, upon

what occasion and for what cause it might be said, yourself doth know right well ; and therefore being now urged by the occasion to open somewhat of this matter I shall desire my Lords and others here, to take a little patience in hearing what I shall say for myself.

“ This man (said he, signifying Rich), came to me from the King on a secret message with commendations from his grace, declaring at large what a good opinion his Majesty had of me, and how sorry he was for my trouble : with many more words than are needful to be repeated because they tended so much to my praise as I was not only ashamed to hear them, but also knew right well that I could no way deserve them, at last he broached the matter of the King’s Supremacy, lately granted unto him by Act of Parliament ; to which he said, ‘ although all the bishops in the realm have consented except yourself alone, and also the whole Court of Parliament both spiritual and temporal, except a very few ; yet the King, for better satisfaction and his own conscience, had sent him in this secret manner to know my full opinion, for the great trust he had in me more than any other ’. He added further, ‘ that if I would frankly and freely advertise his Majesty my knowledge, that upon certificate of my misliking he was very like to retract much of his former doings, and make satisfaction for the same in case I should so advertise him ’. Now when I had heard all his message, and considered a little his words, I put him in mind of the new Act of Parliament, which, standing in force as it doth against all them that shall directly say or do anything that is against it, might thereby endanger me very much, in case I should

utter unto him anything that was offensive against the law. To that he told me that the King willed him to assure me *on his honour and on the word of a King*, that whatever I should say unto him by this his secret messenger I should abide no danger, nor peril for it, neither that any advantage should be taken against me for the same; no, although my words were never so directly against the Statute, seeing it was but a declaration of my mind secretly to him, as to his own person; and for the messenger himself, he gave me his faithful promise that he would never utter my words in this matter to any man living, but to the King alone. Now, therefore, my lords, quoth he, seeing it pleased the King's Majesty to send to me thus secretly, under the pretence of plain and true meaning to know my poor advice and opinion in these his weighty and grave affairs which I most gladly was, and ever will be, willing to give him; methinks it is very hard justice to hear the messenger's accusation, and to allow the same as a sufficient testimony against me in case of treason."

To this speech of the Bishop's, Rich made no direct answer, neither denying his words as false, nor confessing them as true.

Then observed Rich, "Whatever I have said unto him on the King's behalf, my lords, it was no more than his Majesty commanded, and had I said to you in such sort as you have declared," he continued, turning to the Bishop, "I would be glad to know what discharge this is to you in law against his Majesty, for so directly speaking against the statute."

The judges then debated one with another, and

decided by their mouth-piece Audley that the message or promise from the King to him, neither could, nor did by rigour of the law discharge him, but in so declaring his mind and conscience against the Statute, yea, though it *were* at the King's own commandment or request, he committed treason by the Statute, and nothing could save him from death but the King's pardon.

"This good father, perceiving the small account made of his words, and the favourable credit given to his accuser, might then easily find in which way the wind blew ; wherefore, directing his speeches to the lords his judges, he said, ' Yet, I pray you, my lords, consider that by all equity, justice, worldly honesty and courteous dealing I cannot, (as the case standeth), be directly charged therewith as with treason, though I had spoken the words indeed, the same being not spoken *maliciously*, but in the way of advice and counsel, when it was requested of me by the King himself ; and that favour the very words of the Statute do give me, being made only against such as shall *maliciously* gainsay the King's supremacy, and none other ; wherefore, although by rigour of law you may take occasion thus to condemn me, yet I hope you cannot find law, except you add great rigour to it, to cast me down, which herein I trust I have not deserved."

"Malice is but a void and superfluous word," exclaimed Audley, "if a man speak against the King's supremacy in any way, that speaking is to be understood and taken in law as '*maliciously*'."

"My lords," exclaimed the holy prelate, "if the law be so understood, it is a hard exposition, and, as I take it,

contrary to the meaning of them that made it. But then let me ask this question : Whether a single testimony of one man may be admitted as sufficient to prove me guilty of treason for speaking these words, or no ? and whether my answer, negatively, may not be accepted against his affirmative, to my availe and benefit, or no ?” To that the judges and lawyers answered (that being the King’s case) “it rested much in the conscience and discretion of the jury ; and as they, upon the evidence given before them, shall find it, you are either to be acquitted, or else by judgment to be condemned.”

The aged prelate was then fully aware that sentence of death would inevitably be passed upon him, for before the jury left the court to consider the evidence, Audley had so scandalously aggravated the case straining it to high treason, shamelessly violating the rule, by accepting the evidence of one witness, which in treason was considered insufficient, that they easily perceived the kind of verdict they were expected to return, or heap such danger on their own heads as they were ill prepared to undergo.

Some of the Commissioners then charged the bishop with obstinacy and singularity in that he, being but one man, “did presumptuously stand against that which had been agreed upon in the great Council of Parliament, and consented to by all the bishops saving himself alone”.

“Indeed,” replied the bishop, “I might well be accounted singular, if I alone, as you say, stand out in this matter, but I have on my own part the rest of the bishops of Christendom, of whom those of this realm form but an insignificant minority, and having on my side all the

Catholics and bishops of the world since Christ's ascension till now, joined with the whole consent of the universal Church, I must needs account myne own part farre the surer, and as for the obstinacy you object against me I have no way to clear myself thereof, but my own solemn word to the contrary, if you please to believe it, or else, if that will not serve, I am ready to confirm the same by my othe."

"Thus he answered their random objections with many more words profoundly and wisely uttered; with a marvellous, courageous, and rare constancy; inasmuch as many of his hearers, aye, even of his judges, grievously lamented; their inward sorrow being expressed by outward emotion, so that their faces were bathed in tears, when they beheld this man so famous for his virtue and sanctity, so renowned for his learning, in danger of a cruel death, on the weak evidence of such an accuser, contrary to all faith and promise of the King himself."

"But all pity, mercy, right, and justice being set aside, rigour, cruelty, and malice then ensued; for the twelve men being shortly returned from their consultations, a verdict was given that he was guilty of treason; which, although they thus did upon the menacing and threatening words of the Commissioners, the King's learned council; yet was it, no doubt, full sore against their consciences, as some of them would after assert to their dying day, that it was only for safety of their goods and lives, which they were well assured to lose, in case they had acquitted him."

After the verdict thus given by the twelve jurors, the Lord Chancellor, commanding silence to be kept, for a

murmur of sympathy had run round the Court, said unto the prisoner in this sort, "My Lord of Rochester, you have been here arraigned of high treason, and putting yourself on the trial of twelve men, you have pleaded not guilty; and they, notwithstanding, have found you guilty in their conscience; wherefore, if you have any more to say for yourself, you are now to be heard, or else to receive judgment according to the order and course of law".

Then arose this blessed father, and said he:—

"Truly, my lord, if that which I have before spoken be not sufficient, I have no more to say but only to desire Almighty God to forgive them that have thus condemned me."

Then Audley, framing himself to a grave and solemn countenance, passed sentence of death upon him in the following terms:—

"You shall be led to the place from whence you came, and from thence shall be drawn through the city to the place of execution at Tyborne, where your body shall be hanged by the neck; half-alive, you shall be cut down and thrown to the ground, your bowels shall be taken out before your face, you being yet alive, and after your head to be set up wherever the King shall appoint; and God have mercy upon your soul."

And the revolting sentence pronounced, the Bishop craved leave of the Commissioners to speak a few words before he went out of Court, which being given, he thus addressed them:—

"My Lords," exclaimed Fisher, in his usual calm and steady voice, "I am here condemned before you for high

treason, for denial of the King's supremacy over the Church of England, but by what order of justice I leave to God, who is the searcher both of the King's Majesty's conscience and of yours. Nevertheless, being found guilty, as it is termed, I am, I must be contented with all that God shall send, to whose will I wholly refer and submit myself. And now to tell you more plainly my mind touching this matter of the King's supremacy, I thinke indeed, and always have thought, and do now lastly affirm that his grace cannot justly claim any such supremacy over the Church of God as he now taketh upon him, neither hath it ever been seen or heard that any temporal prince before his day hath aspired to that dignity. Wherefore, if the King will now adventure himself in proceeding in this strange and unwonted case, no doubt but he shall deeply incur the grievous displeasure of Almyhtye God, to the great dammage of his owne soule, and of many others, and to the utter ruine of this realme committed to his charge, whereof will ensue some sharp punishment at His hand. Wherefore I pray God his grace may remember himself in time, and hearken to good counsel, for the preservation of himself and his realm and the quietness of all Christendom."





CHAPTER XXV.

LOOKING FORWARD.



AND having spoken thus the holy prelate turned him away and was conducted back to the Tower, the edge of the axe being turned towards him, to signify his approaching execution, and now, by water, then on horseback, the fervid rays of the midsummer sun pouring down on the head of the martyr, he proceeds on the way of his Calvary ; a large multitude thronging about him, bearing halberds and other weapons ; and when at last his tragic journey reached its end, and he had arrived at the Tower-gate, he turned him round to the throng of people who, bewailing and lamenting his fate, had followed closely on his steps, and said Fisher :—

“I thank you, Masters all, for the pains you have taken with me this day. I am not able to give you anything, for I have nothing left ; I pray you to accept my best thanks.”

So bravely did he speak and with such courage, and with a colour in his wasted face, that he seemed as one come from some prosperous suit, and such evident gladness was there in his heart, that one might see that he

longed for the bliss and joy of heaven, and rejoiced he was so near his end for Christ's cause.

Three or four days was the bishop then left in his gloomy prison, and these were days in which, continues the old biographer, "he passed in prayer most fervently and constantly, looking daily, nay hourly, for death, yet could he not be perceived one whit dismayed, but still continued at his old trade of constancy and patience, and rather with a more free and joyful mind than ever he had before, which well appeared by what I am about to tell you. There happened a false rumour to rise suddenly among the people that he should be brought to his execution by a certain day; whereupon he that was wont to dress his dinner, hearing of this rumour, dressed him no dinner at all that day; whereat, when the man next went to him, he demanded why he brought him not his dinner as he was wont to do.

"Sir," replied the cook, "it was commonly talked all the town over that you should have died that day, and I thought it vain to dress anything for you."

"Well," said Fisher, merrily, "for all this report thou seest me yet alive. Therefore whatsoever news thou hearest, let me no more lack my dinner, but make it ready as thou art wont to do; and if thou seest me dead when thou comest, then eat it thyself; but I promise thee, if I be alive, by God's grace to eat never a bit the less."

"Thus whilst this blessed father daily expected the hour of his death, the King, who no less desired it than himself looked for it, caused the writ of execution to be taken to Sir Edmond Walsingham, some five days after the condemnation of the Bishop."

It must have been a happy, nay, a glorious "looking forward" to that persecuted prelate, the knowledge that in a few short days he should be with his God.

He had long been deprived of everything but bare existence ; but now the clouds had cleared away. The enmity of the King could do no more than take away the feeble life of a man who numbered nearly eighty years. The storms of winter were passing, the light and beauty of eternal spring in the kingdom of God was dawning upon him and the other illustrious captive, his friend More. What to either of such men as these was the block and its grim surroundings ? It was release from mental and bodily suffering ; it would open to them both a haven of rest. They feared far less the halter, or the sharp blow of the axe, than does some fever-stricken wretch the silent hours of the night, as they drag wearily along, bringing with a new day no rest or comfort.

How beautiful must have been in these solitary hours the holy prelate's communings with his God. That miserable cell in which he was confined was not to him lonely ; it was full of the unseen presence of his Lord, that omnipresent, omniscient God, who holds in His hand the hearts of all His creatures, and from whom no secret lieth hid.

Looking forward ! Aye, and to what ? Not to the short-lived joys of earth, not to a few years more of life spent in the duties of his holy calling, but to life eternal. His conscience is pure, and can bear him testimony that he watched diligently and lovingly over the pastors and the people committed to his care.

Looking forward ! Oh, with such a gladsome feeling

that so soon he shall stand before the great white throne whereon the Eternal Father sits, while cherubim and seraphim veil their faces and prostrate themselves before the Lamb, who will reward this good servant and faithful steward a hundredfold for the way in which he has multiplied the talents entrusted to his care.

Looking forward ! Alas ! a wonder is it that men and women so blind their eyes that they cling to this world with all its cares and trials, yea, even as if they were made for time and not for eternity. Even the good look not on death without a pang, and are apt to say in their hearts, " Not yet, O Lord ". Life hath many charms, creatures have run away with their best affections, and they contemplate death with a shrinking feeling nigh akin to fear ; for the darksome valley of death must be passed " ere the silver cord be broken, the golden fillet shrunk back, and the spirit return to God who gave it ".

Not so with the death-doomed prelate of whom we write. His soul was full of a holy joy, of which even the weak body felt the influence, for it lighted up his pale and haggard face. He had no books, no priest, no sacrament of love, no earthly friend at hand ; for these last few days were passed in solitude and loneliness as far as earthly companionship went. But his heart was with his God ; he was ever in His presence ; and like winged messengers, aspirations which are ever dear to the holy ones of God ascended unceasingly from his prison-dwelling to the throne of the Eternal.



CHAPTER XXVI.

THE CROWN OF THE MARTYR.



THE judgment passed by Chancellor Audley was not carried out to the letter. "The Lieutenant of the Tower received an order that his prisoner was to be taken no further than Tower-Hill, and there have his head struck off."

Sir Edmond had summoned the officials whose presence would be required for the ghastly scene of the morrow, commanding them to be ready early in the morning of the following day ; and as it was late at night he was loth to disturb the Bishop, but on the morrow, at five o'clock, he went to him. He was then asleep, but he aroused him, telling him he had come to him with a message from the King.

"My Lord," quoth Sir Edmond, "you are an old man. In the common course of nature you could not expect to live much longer."

"Well," replied the holy Bishop, "if this be your errand, you bring me no great news, for I have long looked for this message, and I thank you for your tidings, but I pray you, Mr. Lieutenant, when is mine hour that I may go hence?"

"Nine of the clock."

"Well, then, let me sleep an hour or two, for I have slept very little this night—not for any fear of death, thank God, but on account of my weakness and infirmity."

"And the King's further pleasure is that you use as little speech as maybe, especially touching his Majesty, whereby the people should have any cause to think of him or of his proceedings otherwise than well."

"For that," replied Fisher, "you shall see me order myself as by God's grace neither the King nor any man else shall have occasion to mislike my words." And so departed Sir Edmond, and the prisoner falling again to rest, slept soundly for more than two hours; when, awaking, he called on his man to help him up, first commanding him to take away his hair-shirt, which he was accustomed to wear, to put it away privately, and in place of it, to give him a clean white linen shirt, and all his best apparel recently supplied to him.

"Perceiving in him far more care than he had been usually wont to take, the man demanded of him what this sudden change meant, adding that his lordship knew well enough he must put all off again within two hours, and lose it for ever."

"And what of that?" he replied, "dost thou not mark that this is our wedding day, and it behoveth us to use more solemnity in honour of the bridal."

At nine o'clock, Sir Edmond Walsingham again came to the prison, and finding him almost ready, told him he had come to fetch him away. "I will wait upon you straight," said he, "as fast as this thin old body of mine will give me leave"; then turning to his man,

"Give me," said he, "my furred tippet, that I may put it about my neck." "Oh, my lord," said Sir Edmond, "why need you be so careful of your health for this short time, having, as yourself knoweth, not much above an hour to live?"

"I think no otherwise," replied this blessed father, "yet in the meantime I will keep myself as well as I can till the time of my execution, for though I have, I thank our Lord, a good desire and a willing mind to die, and trust of His infinite mercy He will continue it, yet will I not hinder my health one minute of an hour," and then, taking a little book in his hand, which was a New Testament, he made the sign of the Cross, and went forth from his prison with the lieutenant. He was so weak that he was scarcely able to walk, wherefore at the foot of the steps he was taken up in a chair by two of the men belonging to the lieutenant, and borne to the Tower gate, with a number of men bearing halberds and weapons before him, who were to deliver him to the sheriffs of London for execution.

And now they have reached the uttermost precinct of the Liberty of the Tower, and then they rested with him for a short space, tarrying within the bulwarks, whilst a messenger was sent to know in what readiness the sheriffs were to receive him; and then he rose out of his chair, and standing on his feet, he leaned him against the rough stone wall, and lifting his eyes to heaven, opened the book he held in his hand, and said he, "O Lord, this is the last time that ever I shall open this book; let some comfortable place now chance unto me, whereby I, Thy poor servant, may glorify Thee in this

my last hour," and with that, looking into the book, the first words that met his sight were these :

*"Hæc est autem vita æterna: ut cognoscant te solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum. Ego te clarificavi super terram, opus consummavi, quod dedisti mihi ut faciam; et nunc clarifica me tu, Pater, apud te metipsum, claritate, quam habui, prius quam mundus esset, apud te."*¹

And then he shut the book, saying "Here is even learning enough for me to my life's end."

And the sheriffs now being ready, he was again borne onwards by some of their men, with a much greater number round about him bearing weapons, than before, and was carried to the scaffold on Tower Hill, otherwise called East Smithfield, himself praying all the way, meditating on the words he before had read; and when he had reached the foot of the scaffold, they that carried him offered to help him up the steps.

"Nay, masters," said he, "seeing I am come so farre, let me alone, and ye shall see me shift for myself well enough," and so went he up the stairs so actively that it was a marvel to those who were aware of his debility and weakness.

The sun being south-east shone marvellously bright in his face, so that he could not see, whereupon, lifting up his clasped hands, he exclaimed, raising his eyes to heaven:

"Approach unto Him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded."

¹ Now this is eternal life that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do. And now glorify Thou me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before the world was with Thee."—John xvii.

And by this time it was nine of the clock, and the executioner, according to custom, kneeled down, and besought him to forgive him his death, to whom the bishop replied :

“ I forgive thee with all my heart, and I trust thou shalt see me meet death bravely.”

“ Then was his gown and his tippet taken from him, and he stood in his doublet and hose in sight of the people (of whom I was one), tall, and lean and slender, in a manner all skin and bone, for he had wasted away, and seemed but as the living image of death, but in form as a man.” ¹

A large number of persons assembled to witness the execution of this holy prelate.

“ Christian people,” said he, “ I come hither to die for the faith of the holy Catholic Church.² I thank God hitherto my stomach hath served me well, so that I have not feared death ; wherefore I desire you to help and assist me with your prayers, that at the very instant of my death I faint not in any point of Catholic faith, and I pray God to save the king and realm, hold His holy hand over it, and send the king good counsel.”

“ These few words he spoke with a cheerful countenance, with stout and constant courage, as one no whit afraid, but glad to suffer death, and he spoke so distinctly and with so loud and clear a voice, that the people were amazed, and noted it as a miracle to hear so loud a voice, so plain and strong, proceed from so weak

¹ Harleian MSS. 7049.

² Col. Gresh., L in. Norfolk.

and sickly a body, for the youngest and strongest person present could not have spoken more clearly."

"Then he knelt him down and prayed, and then recited aloud the *Te Deum laudamus* even to the very end; also the psalm, *In te Domine speravi, non confundar in æternum*. And after this a handkerchief was folded round about his eyes, and lifting up his hands and heart, yet again he prayed, not long, but devoutly and fervently, and this done he laid him prostrate on the scaffold, and rested his lean neck upon the block, and with one blow of the sharp and heavy axe, the executioner severed his head from the body, his holy soul departing for the bliss of heaven; meanwhile so copious a stream of blood issued from the neck that all present wondered it had come from so thin and wasted a frame."¹

"Then rode the executioner away with the bishop's clothes, leaving the headless trunk lying on the scaffold almost all the day, till out of pity and humanity some one stepped forward and cast a little straw over the nude remains. The head the executioner had put into a bag, and carried it away with him, meaning to have it set on London Bridge that night, as he was commanded, but the Lady Anne Bullen (who was the chief cause of this holy man's death)² had a certain desire to see the head before it was set up, whereupon being brought to her, she beheld it a space, and at last contemptuously said these or the like words: 'Is this the head that so often exclaimed against me? I trow it shall never do

¹ Norfolk MS.

² Hall's *Life of Fisher*.

more harm,' and with this striking it on the mouth with the back of her hand, she hurt one of her fingers upon a tooth that stuck somewhat more out than the rest did, which finger after grew sore, and putting her to pain many days after, was nevertheless cured at last with much difficulty, but after it was healed, the mark of the hurt place remained to be seen when her own head was not to be seen on her shoulders. This may seem strange and a rare example of cruel boldness in that sex which by nature is fearful, and cannot behold such spectacles, and therefore (argueth no doubt) a wonderful malice which she by all likelihood bore to the holy man living, that could thus cruelly use his head when he was dead."

"About eight of the clock in the evening, commandment came from the King's commissioners to such as watched about the dead body (for it was still watched with many halberds and weapons) that they should cause it to be buried. Whereupon two of the watchers took it up on a halberd between them, and so carried it to a churchyard there hard by, called Allhallows, Barking, where on the north side of the church, hard by the wall, they digged a grave with their halberds, and therein without any reverence, tumbled the body of this holy prelate, without either shirt or other accustomed thing belonging to a Christian man's burial, and so covered it quickly with earth. And this was done on the day of St. Alban, the protomartyr of England, being Tuesday the 22nd of June, in the year of our redemption 1535, and in the 27th year of the King's reign, after he had lived full three score and sixteen years nine months and odd days.¹

¹ About a fortnight later the headless body was taken up and buried with Sir Thomas More's in the Tower Chapel.

“The next day after his burying, the head, being par-boiled, was placed upon a pole, and set on high upon London Bridge, amongst the heads of the holy Carthusians that suffered death lately before him. And here I cannot omit to declare unto you the miraculous sight of this head, which, after it had stood up the space of fourteen days upon the bridge, could not be perceived to waste nor consume, neither for the weather, which then was very hot, neither for the parboiling in hot water, but grew daily fresher and fresher, so that in his lifetime he never looked so well, for his cheeks became beautified with a comely red, the face looked as though it had beholden the people passing by, and would have spoken to them, which many took for a miracle that Almighty God was pleased to show, above the course of nature, in thus preserving the fresh and lively colour in his face, surpassing the colour he had being alive ; whereby was noted to the world the innocence and holiness of this blessed father, that thus innocently was content to lose his head in defence of his mother, the holy Catholic Church of Christ ; whereby the people coming daily to see this strange sight, the passage over the bridge was so stopped with their going and coming, that almost neither cart nor horse could pass, and therefore at the end of fourteen days, the executioner was commanded to throw down the head in the night time into the river of Thames, and in the place thereof was set the head of the most blessed and constant martyr, Sir Thomas More, his companion in all his troubles, who suffered his passion the 6th day of July next following. And touching the place of his buriall in the churchyard

of Allhallows, Barking, it was well observed at that time by divers worthy persons of the nations of Italy, Spain, and France, that were then abiding in the realm, and more diligently noted and wrote the course of things, and with less fear and suspicion than any of the king's subjects might or durst do, that for the space of seven years after his burial there grew neither leaf nor grass upon his grave, but the earth still remained as bare as though it had been continually occupied and trodden.

“When by common fame this bloody execution was blown abroad, straightway the name of King Henry began to grow*odious amongst good people, not only in his own realm at home, but also among all foreign princes, and nations abroad through Christendom, inso-much that Paul III., then Pope of Rome, with great grief signified these doings by severall letters to all the Christian princes, openly detesting the outrage of King Henry in committing such a wicked and manifest injury, not only against the freedom and privilege of the Church of Rome, but also against the whole state of Christ's universal Church ; for the which in short space after, he pronounced the terrible sentence of excommunication against him.

“Likewise the most noble and Christian Emperor Charles V., at such a time as Sir Thomas More was beheaded, and word thereof brought to him, sent speedily for Sir Thomas Elliot, the King's ambassador there resident with him, and asked him whether he heard any such news or no? who answered him that he heard no such thing. ‘Yes,’ said the Emperor, ‘it is true, and too true, that Sir Thomas More is now executed to

death, and a good bishop hath lately been before'; and with that, giving a sigh, added: 'Alas! what meant the King to kill two such men? for,' said he, 'the bishop was such a one as for all purposes, I think the King had not the like again in all his realm, neither yet was to be matched through Christendom; so that,' said he, 'the King, your master, hath in killing that bishop, killed at one blow all the bishops in England.' 'And Sir Thomas More,' he added, 'was well known for a man of such profound wisdom, cunning and virtue, that if he had been towards me as he was towards the King, your master, I had rather have lost the best city in all my dominions, than such a man.'"¹

¹ Dr. Hall.





CHAPTER XXVII.

NOTES FROM THE NORFOLK MANUSCRIPTS.



WHEN the matter of the divorce first sprung up, and was in every man's mouth, the bishop had been wont to say to some of his family, and sometimes openly at his table, that it was a quarrel wherein a man might well spend his life; and that himself could well find it in his heart so to do.

He would always tell his brother that was steward of his house that he would have his revenues fully spent every year, so that he were not brought into debt, and he never failed to stand at a window, at which he could see the poor people served at the gate, after himself had dined, and he never sat fully an hour over his dinner.

His donations were very great to the Chapel of St. John's, Cambridge; he gave many copes, vestments, rich hangings, and altar vessels to it.

He founded a chapel behind the high altar of the said college, and a tomb of fair white stone, finely wrought, wherein he purposed to have been buried, if God had so disposed; he founded a *Dirige* to be sung yearly for him, at which the Master of the College should have a

noble, the President a crown, and every fellow three shillings and fourpence.

Above his chapel and tomb was engraved in fair Roman letters this sentence, *Faciam vos fieri Piscatores hominum*¹ (alluding to his name, Fisher). He ordained in the statutes of that college that evermore the fourth part of the fellows should be preachers, and that every fellow should direct his study to that end to be a preacher. All the stalls in the quire of the college had engraved on them a fish and an ear of wheat, but after he had suffered at London, my Lord Cromwell, by order of the king, ordered them to be defaced, and ugly substitutes to be fixed in their places.

He was, during much of the time that he was bishop, also Chancellor of the University, so that he had the rule and care of all that were students in that university, for whose profit he made no less provision than he did for his own sheep. He was also a diligent preacher, the most notable in all the realm, as well for his learning as for the edifying his listeners and moving his hearers to cling to God and to a virtuous life; and so profoundly learned was he in Divinity that he was esteemed not only as the chiefest of divines, but the very flower of divinity.

He wrote many learned and famous works in the Latin tongue, and in English he wrote many excellent sermons full of high contemplation and moral lessons, two on S. Paul's work in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians *Sine intermissione orate*,² and seven on the

¹ I will make you to be fishers of men.—(Matt. iv. 19.)

² Pray without ceasing.

Penitential Psalms, and another full of great learning on the supremacy of the Pope and the See of Rome.¹

He was indeed in learning, virtue, and diligence in his cure, and in fulfilling his office as a bishop, such that for many hundred years England had not a prelate to be compared with him, and if all Christendom were searched, there could not easily amongst all other nations, be found one that could in all things be found the like unto him, who so well fulfilled the office of bishop as he. He was a strict champion for the dignity of the sacerdotal order, and though he would not allow the laity to insult the clergy on account of their misbehaviour, he was always one of the first to move for a redress in a canonical way, and was himself by his life and conversation the model of a true reformation.

How great a master he was, and how great a friend to learning both our universities can attest, also his own works sufficiently show it to us, a list of which we shall give later.


¹ This is, we suppose, the sermon which was condemned by proclamation.—MS. Cott.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

BEHOLD A JUST MAN!

N his countenance he bore such a reverent gravity, and in his doings exercised such discreet severity, that not only by his equals but even by his superiors he was honoured and esteemed. In speech he was very mild, temperate, and modest, saving in matters of God and his episcopal charge, and herein he would be earnest above his accustomed order, but vainly, or without cause he would never speak, neither was his ordinary conversation of common worldly matters, but rather of divinity and the high power of God, of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell, of the glorious death of martyrs, and strait life of confessors, with such like profitable conversation which he always uttered with such a heavenly grace that his words were always edifying to his hearers."

"He had so continually the remembrance of death in his heart that his mouth never ceased to utter the inward thoughts of his mind, even at his meals, for he would always say the remembrance of death never came out of season, and of his own end he would now and then (as occasion was given) cast out such words as though he had some foreboding of the manner of his death, for divers of his chaplains and household servants reported

that long before his death they had heard him say he should not die in his bed, but speaking of it, it would be with such a cheerful countenance that they might easily perceive him rather to conceive joy than sorrow. In study he was very laborious and painful ; in preaching assiduous, ever beating down heresy and vice ; in prayer most fervent and devout ; in fasting, abstinence, and punishing of his lean body, rigorous without measure, and generally in all things belonging to the care and charge of a true bishop, he was to all the bishops of England living in those days, the very mirror and lamp of light."

"One Mr. Philips, for many years Dean of Rochester in the days of Edward VI., when certain commissioners were coming to him to search his house for books, out of fear burned a large volume which this holy bishop had compiled, containing in it the whole story and matter of the divorce, and which he had entrusted to his care, and gave him with his own hand a little before his trouble ; for the loss whereof the Dean would many times after lament, and wish he had it again, even on condition he had not one groat to live on.

"Pope Paul III., writing (as before is said) to the Princes of Christendom of the dealings of King Henry against this godly man, wrote, among others, one letter to Ferdinand, King of the Romans, which I myself have seen and read.¹ In this letter, after great complaint made against King Henry for killing of such a man whom he before, for his great sanctity and virtue, had enrolled in the number and society of the cardinals,

¹ Dr Hall.

hoping thereby that all should have turned to his better safety and deliverance, because that diguity in all places hath ever been accounted sacred, yet now falling out otherwise, he taketh occasion to compare the doings of King Henry VIII. to the doings of his progenitor King Henry II., and this holy father he compareth, or rather preferreth, to the holy martyr, St. Thomas of Canterbury, saying that this King Henry did not only renew the impiety of Henry II. but also went far beyond him, for where he slew one, this King slew many. St. Thomas defended the right of a particular church, Fisher, the universal ; Henry II. killed an archbishop, but this king hath put to death a cardinal of the Church of Rome ; Henry II. exiled St. Thomas by long banishment ; but Henry VIII. tormented this holy man by long and hard imprisonment ; to St. Thomas certain hired men were sent to kill him, to this prelate was assigned only a hangman ; Henry II. caused St. Thomas to be slain ; but Henry VIII. by a shameful torment hath killed the holy man of God. Henry II. sought to purge himself before Alexander III., and not laying fault upon others, did with humility take upon him such penance as was to him enjoined by the Bishop of Rome ; but this prince with a most obstinate mind, defends his own horrible fault showing himself not only unwilling to do penance but also becometh a stubborn and rebellious enemy against the Church of Rome.

“Then consider what that man of happy memory (Cardinal Pole) writeth of him in sundry places of his works, who in his lifetime both knew him and was familiarly acquainted with him, but especially in that

book which he wrote to King Henry VIII., entitled *Pro Ecclesiasticæ Unitatis Defensione*, wherein he extolleth the name of this blessed prelate with words according to his great worthiness, saying to the King that 'If an ambassador had to be sent from earth to heaven, there could not among all the bishops and clergy so fit a man be chosen as he ; for what other man,' saith he, 'have ye now, or of many years past had compared with him in sanctity, learning, wisdom, and careful diligence in the office and duty of a bishop ? of whom ye may justly, above all other nations, glory and rejoyce, that, if all the corners of Christendom were narrowly sought, there could not be found out any one man that in all things did accomplish the office of a bishop equally with him.'

"Further, in the same place he laudeth him highly for his great travail and care in the education of youth, especially of the young students in the University of Cambridge, for that, by his holy means and advice, that noble and right virtuous lady, Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, sometime his mistress, erected two famous colleges in that university (as before in this history hath been named), wherein young scholars receive great comfort towards their instruction in learning, unto which number, himself became also a very patron and father ; and being after chosen by the whole consent of the university into the room of their High Chancellor, he became no less careful over them than over the flock of his diocese. All which, with many other high praises, his most virtuous, learned, and high born cardinal set down very bountifully of him."

“ Likewise blessed Sir Thomas More, his companion and fellow in adversity and trouble, upon occasion of talk, ministered unto him by his daughter, Mrs. Roper, about refusing the oath by my Lord of Rochester and himself, saith in a certain epistle to his said daughter, that he hath had him in such a reverend estimation, as for his wisdom, learning, and long approved virtue together, he reckoneth in this realm no one man to be matched or compared with him.

“ Furthermore, the renowned Bishop of Niceria, and most eloquent historiographer of our time, P. Jovius, although he lacketh no commendation of him throughout all his whole history, yet in one place especially he saith, that upon the acceptance of his great charge of a bishoprick he became so vigilant over his flock for the space of many years together, that he was to be wondered at, not only of his own country people at home, but also other foreign nations ; then he greatly reverenceth him for his constant piety in defending the marriage between King Henry and his lawful wife, Queen Catherine, and for withstanding the King’s wilful mind in taking upon him so absurdly the name and title of Supreme Head of the Church, for the which he did not refuse, even in his old age, to suffer the loss of liberty, living, life, and all.

“ Then weigh what is said of him by that most eloquent and learned father, Stanislaus Hosius, Bishop of Warmia, in Poland, and Cardinal of Rome, in his book of confutation against Brentius the heretic ; his words beginning thus : *Fatemur nos, Brenti*, wherein he sheweth very notably how, although in all ages heretics have

lifted up themselves against the Church of God, yet hath he not forsaken or left her destitute at any time.

“Neither hath God, in these our unfortunate days, failed His Church; for, whereas you Lutherans are broken forth, and from you are sprung Zwinglians, Muncerans, and a number of other heretics, God hath produced against you into the battle many worthy men, endowed with singular wit and excellent learning, by whom your raging madness might be suppressed and put down. Among whom especially and by name was that famous holy man, John, Bishop of Rochester, who, in defence of the faith and Catholic Church of Christ, never stuck for the loss of his life, and the shedding of his blood.’

“Finally, whosoever shall read of Cochleus, Ekius, and several other learned writers of Germany; of the worthy bishop and eloquent writer Ozonius, of Alphonsus de Castro, and others of Spain and Portugal; besides a number of such other learned fathers of many nations, whereof some lived in his own days, and some since, shall easily perceive that he was a man, for his profound learning and rare virtue, highly revered and esteemed throughout all Christendom.”

“And no doubt but, if his writings and doings be well compared, ye shall find him most like those holy fathers and doctors that in the primitive Church laid the very first ground and foundation of our belief, upon the which we have since rested and stayed ourselves, whom to describe wholly and fully unto you, according to his worthiness, I will not take upon me, neither am I able to do it; yea, were I as eloquent as Cicero, or as witty

and subtle as Aristotle, as copious as Demosthenes, or as profound in philosophy as Plato : such and so innumerable were his virtues !


“ But herein I will content myself with the general commendation, which all the famous Universities of Divinity in Europe do give this learned man by calling him blessed martyr, and alleging his works for great authority. This much I may also say that unto his saintly predecessor, the first Bishop of Rochester, he was a just and true successor. The place of his birth he doth greatly beautify with the glorious Bishop St. John of Beverley ; to the county of Kent, where he was Bishop, he is an ornament with St. Thomas of Canterbury ; in gravity of his writing, he is to be revered with St. Bede ; for stout defending of the right and liberty of the holy Church against the power of Princes, he is not inferior to the blessed Bishops St. Ambrose and St. Chrysostom ; in praying for his enemies and persecutors, he resembled holy St. Stephen ; in constancy and stoutness of his martyrdom, he was a second Cyprian ; and in the manner of his death a St. John the Baptist.”





CHAPTER XXIX.

RETRIBUTION.

ND now we shall observe the wonderful workings of Almighty God, whose judgments are secret and strange in our sight, much to be marked and noted in him and his adherents ; for, as God of His own nature is patient and longsuffering, because He expecteth the amendment of our sinful lives, so is He also just in His doings, and punisheth grievously when no amendment is endeavoured, as now may well be perceived by those persons that were persecutors of this blessed man ; for they escaped not the danger of His heavy hand, as shall be declared unto you."

"As first, to begin with the King himself : *in quo quid peccat, in eo puniter* ; the Almighty commonly makes rods for our own sins, wherewith He often punisheth those that offend Him ; as here most notably it is to be observed in the threefold manner of his displeasure which induced him to be so cruel to this good man, that nothing but the pain of death could satisfy his ireful indignation ; as first, for resisting his so inordinate desire of changing wives ; secondly, for his refusing to

take the oath of succession, and his constant disapproval of the unlawful courses which he took to procure to himself issue male ; thirdly, for withstanding his supremacy in causes ecclesiastical. These were the three causes of his displeasure, which, like a trident, he struck into the breast of innocence, while the three pointed sceptres made their several entries within his own bosom. For the first, he that robbed so many breasts of the possession of so great a joy and happiness in being his, through his desire of change, found change in robbery to his own heart's contentment, in so many wives, which lawfully were none of his ; for of the six bells whereon he rung this change, two of them were repudiated, two beheaded, one wittingly killed, and the last so displeasing to him, as he had determined to have sent her to the Tower ; so far onward in her way to the fate of her predecessors had not his approaching death caused her to survive.

“ As to the second, viz., the unlawful means which he took to have succession by his issue male, those females whom he illegitimated, succeeded, and his issue male deceased, that they might succeed.

“ As to the third, viz., his assuming and taking upon him the supremacy of the Church, whose doings herein were neither approved by the Roman party (as monstrous in their opinions) nor by the Lutherans and Zwinglians, as different from theirs ; what the holy martyr conjectured thereupon it came to pass ; for, said he, in the convocation house (when this business was impending) ‘ the King desires that we would make him head of the Church ; his successors will expect to be

the like : what if his successor should chance to be a child or a woman ? how shall we be governed by such ?' And accordingly the Almighty, to show us the ridiculousness of the usurpation, left him none but women and a child to succeed him in that office—women that could not speak in the Church of God, and a child that knew not how, till at length he had neither male nor female to sit any more upon the throne than in the chair, death having made all their hands (issueless) as unapt to sway the sceptre, as improper for the King.

“Next to the King, I shall observe the punishment of Almighty God, which lighted heavily on the Queen Anne Bullen, the chief and principal cause of all this woful tragedy, who in a short space was suddenly thrown down from the top of all her high dignity and honour (whose glory was exalted upon this man's ruin), condemned, and accused to be worthy of death by her own father, together with divers others of her own kindred, and the nobility then sitting in judgment, who not long before were her idolaters, and she their idol ; whereupon she was executed on the Tower Green, her head being stricken off ; of whose loss the King himself felt such sorrow that the very next day after she was dead he mourned for her in a wedding garment !

“Next to the Queen we will call to mind Mr. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who of his own power, without any other warrant or authority, pronounced the sentence of divorce between the King and Queen (being calculated to the height of that meridian) ; and afterwards called this holy man before him, and cast him into prison for refusing the two new oaths—the one

of the King's new marriage, the other of the new supremacy ; from whence he was never delivered, till death rid him of all worldly cares. This Archbishop lived till he was condemned for a traitor, because he spread certain seditious libels amongst the people and assisted the Duke of Northumberland in his rebellion (in the behalf of the Lady Jane) against his lawful sovereign. But forasmuch as this was done in Queen Mary's days, and the clergy had somewhat else to say to him, they burned him as a heretic.

“As for Mr. Rich, the King's solicitor, and the decoy to this good man, who gave such strange and injurious testimony against him at his arraignment, he lived to be deposed from all his high places and preferments, and fell into deep disgrace not only with the King, his master, but with those who afterwards sat at the helm in the young King's time ; insomuch that affliction brought him to understand, and the knowledge of himself led to true repentance ; so it is to be believed that he escaped without any further punishment than the clipping of his wings whilst he was alive and the singeing of his body when he was dead ; for his dead body being laid into a coffin, seared and embalmed, certain candles that were set upon the hearse, through the watchers' negligence or absence, fell down and took hold first on the clothes, and then upon the coffin, till at length it came unto the sere clothes : that before any man could come unto the rescue, the fire was greatly onward in its way to have deceived the worms.

“Lastly, we shall conclude with Mr. Cromwell, a shrewd enemy of this good man, and a great agent in this

business ; a man in whose behalf the Archbishop of Canterbury thus writes in his letter to the King after his troubles had beginning, viz. :—*‘A man that was so advanced by your Majesty, whose surety was only by your Majesty, who loved your Majesty no less than God, who studied always to set forward whatever was your Majesty’s will and pleasure, who cared for no man’s displeasure to serve your Majesty, who was such a servant, in my judgment, in wisdom, diligence, faithfulness, and experience, as no Prince in this realm ever had the like : who was so vigilant to preserve your Majesty from all treasons that few could be so secretly conceived but he detected the same in the beginning. Such a man that if the noble Princes of memory—King John, Henry II., Richard II.—had had such a counsellor about them, I suppose they would never have been so treacherously abandoned and overthrown as those good Princes were. Who shall your grace trust hereafter if you mistrust him ? Alas ! I bewail and lament your grace’s chance herein. I wot not whom your grace may trust, &c.’* And for this fidelity, ability, and good service, he was advanced successively to the dignities of Master of the Rolls, Baron, Lord Privy Seal, Knight of the Garter, Earl of Essex, Lord High Chamberlain of England, and (higher than all this) Vicar-General of the Church of England, by virtue of which office he took place above them who were metropolitans of all England. And yet notwithstanding, he was arrested at the Council-table of high treason, by the Duke of Norfolk, when he least suspected any such design, committed to the Tower, brought thence unto the Hill, and (without being permitted to plead for himself)

there beheaded without any more ado. But the strangest thing of all is, that he that was the King's Vice-Regent in spiritual causes, should be accused for an heretic, and that made one of the causes of his death; and that he that was such a great enemy to the Catholics (kicking down all the religious houses of the land and grinding the religious together with the rubbish under his feet) should at his death openly profess that he would die in the Catholic faith.

"Thus we see God's justice in the destruction of the Church's enemies. Who knows but that He may help her to good friends, though not such as may restore her her own jewels, yet such as may heal her of her wounds? And who knows but that it may be effected by the same name, sithence the Almighty hath communicated so great a secret unto mortals, as that there should be such a *salve* made known to them, whereby the same weapon that made the wound should work the cure? *Oliva vera* is not so hard to be construed *Oliverus*, as that it may not be believed that a prophet, rather than a herald, gave the common father of Christendom, the now Pope of Rome (Innocent X.), such ensigns of his nobility (viz., a dove holding an olive branch in her mouth), since it falls short in nothing of being both a prophecy and fulfilled, but only his holiness running into her arms, whose emblem of innocence bears him already in her mouth."

So far Dr. Hall, whose quaint old work we have quoted in its entirety for this chapter, which we have headed "Retribution," it needs no words from our own feeble pen in the way of addition. The infamy of such

men as Rich, Audley, Cromwell, and Archbishop Cranmer has been attested many times since the far-off days of 1640, in which Dr. Hall wrote his now very rare work on saintly Bishop Fisher.





CHAPTER XXX.

HOW THE BISHOP PASSED HIS TIME IN THE TOWER.



URING the greater part of the Bishop's confinement he appears to have been allowed the use of pens, ink, and paper, though later, these comforting privileges were denied him.

For the use of his half-sister, Elizabeth, a professed nun of the order of the Augustine-Eremites, in the nunnery at Dartford, in his own diocese, he wrote whilst in the Tower a small tract, which he entitled *A Method of attaining to the highest perfection of Religion*, in which he compared the life of a Religious to that of a *hunter*. The offices of a Religious were, he said, many watchings, tedious fastings, often going to the choir and joining in the singing, a voluntary abdication of honours, riches, and pleasures, an avoiding all secular and useless discourse, a practising obedience and submission to superiors, and an easy and affable conversation with their equals. But now, he proceeds to say, these things were done more abundantly by hunters, purely for the delight they took in their game, than by many nuns for the love of Christ. Thus, for instance, the nuns in the

choir spent all the forenoon in singing, which certainly could not be done without taking some pains, but the hunter in the fields, though he did not sing, yet hallooed and made a noise perpetually, and was all the day long encouraging his dogs by speaking to them as loud as he could, which must necessarily be a greater labour.

To the same sister the Bishop had previously sent a sermon of his on Our Lord's Passion, in a letter prefixed, in which he called her his most beloved sister, and observes that nothing has a greater force and efficacy towards leading a good life than that when the soul perceives itself sluggish, dry, and without devotion, and heavy, and drowsy as to prayers and the other offices of piety, it should make some useful meditation, and so again raise and enliven herself. For which reason, he tells her, he had composed this meditation, which he earnestly desired for his sake, and her own soul's sake, she would read through at such times as she perceived herself very heavy and dull as to the undertaking any good work. He next advises her, if she desired to read with profit, to do three things: First, to consider herself in such circumstances as that in a little time she must die, and that her soul having left this mortal body will immediately pass from hence never to return again, either to amend by repentance what has been ill done, or even to make any atonement for it. Secondly, never to come to the reading of it but when she was alone and out of company, when she might be very attentive and with a mind wholly free and discharged from the troubles of other thoughts and cares. Thirdly, when she was about to undertake this meditation, first to lift up her

soul to God, imploring His divine grace and assistance that the reading which she intends may not be unfruitful, but may produce and bring to effect by His most holy will the resolution of leading a devout life, and to this end to use some ejaculations of this kind : *O God, make speed to save me ! O Lord, make haste to help me ! Glory be to the Father, &c.* This sermon or meditation the Bishop began thus : " The prophet Ezeckiel relates," said he, " that he saw a book spread before him, which was written within and without, and there was written therein mourning, and lamentations, and woe. Truly this was a wonderful and very amazing book, and the prophet drew from it much consolation and knowledge, since he adds in the following chapter, it was in my mouth like unto honey for sweetness. This book may typify a crucifix, which without doubt was a wonderful book, in which (said the Bishop), if we very often exercised our force of admiration, we should obtain both wonderful comfort and knowledge."

The Bishop likewise wrote a treatise on the necessity of prayer, of the three principal fruits of prayer, and of the manner of praying, which, together with the other two just before mentioned, seems to have been written in English, and afterwards translated into Latin. There is likewise a little manual of the Bishop's, entitled *Psalms or Prayers of John, Lord Bishop of Rochester.*



CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BISHOP'S LITERARY ATTAINMENTS.



BISHOP FISHER¹ was the friend and patron of the learned Richard Croke, as well as of Erasmus, and in all respects the greatest favourer of learning and learned men that the age afforded. Erasmus gratefully owns this in many of his Epistles. He also speaks great things of the Lady Margaret on account of her munificence in founding colleges in her lifetime. "Whereas good works are generally left to corrupt executors, and often prove abortive, she had the pleasure of seeing under the management of the trusty Bishop everything advancing that could promote piety and learning."

Whilst at Cambridge, Erasmus was very straitened in his circumstances, but the good prelate had so great a respect for him, knowing how serviceable he was to the University, that though he himself did not much abound in money yet he supplied him as far as he was able. No age perhaps ever afforded a person whose heart was so set on the promotion of literature in himself and others

¹ Knight's *Life of Erasmus*, p. 156.

than this Bishop, who, when he had reached the advanced age of sixty, could not satisfy himself without learning Greek, of which he found great want in his theological studies, therefore he begged Erasmus, to use his interest with his friend Latimer, to instruct him. His wish was not granted it appears, still he made shift to acquire a tolerable knowledge of it, of which he gave a specimen a few years after in the title page of his book in *Confutation of the Lutheran Assertions*, round about which, within a border, was printed this sentence: *Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing*, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.¹

Erasmus had been invited to Cambridge by the Bishop, provided, as we have said above, with all necessaries, and promoted by his means to the Lady Margaret's Professorship of Divinity, and afterward to the chair of Greek Professor.

Dupin and Moreri tell us, that the Bishop's works were printed separately in England, but there needs no more to be said than what has been before related, to show that this is a mistake. After the Bishop's death we are told they were collected by Francis Birckman, a bookseller, who took care to have them printed from the author's own manuscript. They were afterwards published again in one volume in folio with this title—*R. D. D. Joannis Fischerij Roffensis in Anglia Episcopi Opera, &c., Wirceburgi apud Geo. Fleischmannum, Anno CIO IO. xcvi.* Besides these the Bishop composed a large volume, containing the whole history and matter

¹ Lewis's *Life of Fisher*, Vol. I., p. 61.

of the King's divorce ; it was this volume which he delivered with his own hand to Philips, prior of the Church of Rochester, and afterward, on the dissolution of the Priory, Dean of the said church.

The Bishop's works are as follows :—

Defensio Regiæ Assertionis contra Captivitatem Babyloniam. Colon.

Sacri Sacerdotii Defensio contra Lutherum. Colon.

Assertionis Lutheraniæ Confutatio per articulos XLI.
Antwerp, 1523.

De Veritate Corporis et Sanguinis Christi in Eucharistia, contra Johan Oecolampadium. Colon, 1527.

Sanctum Petrum fuisse Romæ contra Ulricum Velenum.

Sermon at the Burning of Luther's Works. Cambridge, 1521.

De Fructu Orationis.

Expositio Orationis Dominicæ.

De Unica Magdalena, libri tres, Lovan.

The fruitful sayings of David, or the Seven Sermons on the Seven Psalms. Lon., Oct., 1555. Translated from the Latin.

Sermon on the Passion, translated.

Sermo de Institutione Phariseorum et Christianorum.

De Charitate Christiana.

De Necessitate Orandi.

Psalmi et Precationes.

Tractatus de Purgatorio.

Sermon at the Funeral of Henry VII.

Sermon at the Funeral of the Countess of Richmond.

Additiones de Unica Magdalena.

Contra Commentaria Jodochi Clichtovei et Fabri.

"The great Erasmus¹ is perfectly in raptures whenever he mentions him, so as to seem to want words to express himself concerning him. He styles him a man without comparison at that time, either for integrity of life or learning, or greatness of mind: one to be commended not only for his admirable integrity of life but also for his deep and profound learning, and his incredible civility, a man eminent for his integrity, a pious bishop, and a divine of uncommon learning. When he mentions his episcopal character he represents him as one adorned with all kinds of episcopal virtues, and when he speaks of him as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, he describes him as an ornament to that famous school of learning, since in every respect he acted the part of an excellent governor."

The Bishop had the happiness of being much beloved by Henry VII. and his mother, the Countess of Richmond, who confided much in him on account of her long experience of his goodness, and as much admired him for his preaching.

"For S. John's College, finished and settled by the Bishop, he always retained a very great kindness, inso-much that out of his own estate he founded here two Fellowships and two Scholarships, which Scholars and three of the Fellows were to be of the County of York, where the Bishop was born, and the other Fellow of the diocese of Rochester, of which he was Bishop. Two of these *four* Fellows, at least, were to be priests, and in their masses particularly to pray for his soul as also those of the Lady Margaret and her son, Henry VII.

¹ Lewis's *Life of Fisher*, Ed. Turner.

"The Bishop¹ also founded four Examinators—one for Humanity, a second for Logic, a third for Mathematics, and a fourth for Philosophy—who were each to have a salary of 40s. a year; and two Lecturers—one of the Greek for the younger students, and the other of the Hebrew tongue for those who were more advanced in years—to each of which he ordered by his last statutes, under seal dated July 11, 1530, a yearly salary of three pounds. The foundation, together with what he paid for mortmaining of the Maison Dieu, near Ospringe,² cost him £500, a sum almost equal to £4000 now.

"He likewise at his own expense built a chapel, yet standing, on the north side of the College Chapel, into which it opens by a large wide arch at the east end. Here he intended to have had his body deposited after his death, and a monument erected to his memory, for which he had provided polished white marble, several pieces of which are yet lodged near this chapel. The arms of the see of Rochester, which were engraven on a shield with the Bishop's own coat, are still remaining, but the Bishop's arms were defaced by order of the King immediately after his execution, as also his arms on the ends of the stalls, a fish and an ear of wheat, and this motto, alluding to his name : *faciam vos fieri piscatores hominum*—I will make you *fishers* of men.

¹ Lewis's *Life of Fisher*, Vol. I., p. 58.

² An old decayed Maison Dieu or hospital in Ospringe Street, Faversham, Kent, the lands and tenements belonging to which, Fisher, by the mediation of the Queen and Wolsey, obtained as an addition to the College Estate. The grant brought with it several good estates in Kent.—Lewis, p. 54.

"His Lordship also gave for the use of the chapel in plate, vestments, and other ornaments to the value of £1128 10s., as follows :—

"A chalice, wyth a paten gilte ponderynge, 27 ounces.

"Item, 2 challessys parcell gylte, weying together 26 ounces.

"Item, a pix of silver and gylte graven wyth roses lyde pertaynyng to the same, havynge in the top a crosse and a crucifix ponderynge, 28 ounces.

"Item, a standyng cup gylt with a cover ponderyng, 14 ounces.

"Item, 3 rector stanys, twayne of them capped with sylver, weying 16 ounces.

"Item, 2 grete salts with a cover all gylte, weying 52 ounces.

OF THE RIGHT REV. FATHER.

"Fyrst, a swett of Vestments of rede cloth of gold with spangs and crosses in the mydyst, embrothered wythe Jesus Christe and portcolis, to the value of	£26	0	0
"Item, the copys of the same clothe of gold, wyth lyke velvet, and embrothered, to the value of - - - - -	34	6	8
"Item, a vestment of clene cloth of golde, wyth the bake of embrothered worke, of the value of - - - - -	7	13	4
"Item, a vestment of grene velvet, embrothered with red rosys, wyth a crosse of golde of stole warke wrought wyth dasys, to the value of - - - - -	15	0	0

"Item, two other paulys for the hygh altar, paned with clothe of gold and cremsyn velvet, to the value of	-	-	-	6	13	4
"Item, 4 casys of cloth of golde, wyth fine corporalls perteynyng to the same, to the value of	-	-	-	0	16	8
"Item, 2 Spanish napkyns, wroght with sylke and golde	-	-	-	-	-	-
"Money payd for all thes by the said reve- rend father in God	-	-	-	1128	10	0
"Item, payd for the mortmaynyng of Higham and Brome-Hill	-	-	-	200	0	0

"Lastly, by a deed of gift he made to the College, only reserving to himself the use of them during his life, his noble library. This, the College, in a letter sent by them to the Duke of Somerset, then Regent, some years after the Bishop's death, called 'a great treasure, and meet to have been placed among good and skilful men'. In the same letter they told the Duke, that by his too obstinately defending a false doctrine, he had stripped the very excellent learning here taught of its ornaments and riches, and that the Bishop absolutely governed the College, so that therefore the most noble ornaments which the Lady Margaret gave to it, were put into his hands, and thus his perverse doctrine had deprived *him* of his life, and *them* of their exceeding great wealth.

"These things, though done at some distance of time, I choose to put altogether here, as shewing at one view how much this College is indebted and obliged to the care and munificence of the Bishop and what returns they afterwards made." ¹

¹ Lewis's Ed., Turner, Vol. II., p. 248.

"Furthermore," the writer adds, "one would conclude that the Bishop's household goods and furniture were not his own but the College's, and that he had the use of them only as its trustee. Nay, they are not so grateful as even to mention his own free gift to them of his library, but speak of it as if that likewise were their own."

This conduct, however, on the part of the College was just as might have been expected. The author from whom we quote, seems to forget that by this time (the reign of Edward VI.) the fruits of the so-called Reformation had budded into full bloom; the old faith had nearly died out; the mass was abolished as an idolatrous fable: it was deemed a superstitious deceit to pray for its founder as he had intended; the men of the new learning had made new rules and new laws. Could the Bishop have returned to life and visited his beloved Cambridge, he would have found matters appertaining to religion in the condition he had foretold.


The Very Rev. Mr. Baker, the Cambridge Antiquary, and Fellow of S. John's College, was at great pains to obtain an authentic portrait of Fisher. The following lines were written by him on receiving a copy of the original picture:—

"Welcome from exile, happy soul, to me,
And to these walls that owe their rise to thee.
Too long thou'rt banished hence, by shame disgrace't,
Thy arms thrown down, thy monument deface't,
Thy bounties great, like thee, involved in night,
Till some bold hand shall bravely give them light.
Too long oppress't by force and power unjust,
Thy blood a sacrifice to serve a lust.
In vain proud Herod bids thee be forgot:
Thy name shall brightly shine while his shall rot."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

BISHOP FISHER'S FUNERAL SERMON ON KING HENRY VII.

N Wednesday, the 9th of May, 1509, being the day appointed for the bringing of the King's body from Richmond in order to its interment, it was with great reverence conveyed in a chariot to the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul, where it was taken out and carried into the quire, and set under a goodly hearse of wax, garnished with banners, pencelles, and cushions, and next day, May 10, there was "sounge a solemne dirge and a masse, with the following sermon made by the Bishoppe of Rochester".¹

Dilexi quoniam.

Forasmuch as this honorable audience now is here assembled to prosecute the funeral observances and ceremonyes about this most noble Prince, late our King and Sovereigne, King Henry the Seventh, and albeit I know myne own unworthyness and imhabylyties to this grete matter, yet for my most bounden duty, and for his gracious favor and singular benefits exhibited unto me in this lyfe, I would now after his deth right effectuously somethynge saye whereby your charity might the rather

¹ Hall's Chronicles Henry VIII.

have his soul recommended. And to that purpose I will entreat the first psalm of the Dirige, which psalm was written by the holy Kyng and Profyt, Kyng David, comforting hym after his grete falles and trespasses against Almightye God, and redde in the church in the funeral obsequies of every chrysten person when that he dyeth. And, especially it may be redde in the person of this most noble prynce, for in it is comprysed all that is to be sayde in this mater and in the same maner that the secular orators have in their funeral oracions most dylygently observed, which resteth in three poynts, First, in the commendacions of hym that dede is, Secondly, in a strykyng of the hearers to have compassion on hym, and, thirdly, in a comforyng of them agayne, which three can be done in order in this same Psalm, as by the grace of God may hereafter appear.

Fyrst, as touching his laud and commendacion, let no man thinke that my entreat is to praise hym for any vaine or transitory thyng, albeit he had as moche of them as any man or as was possible for any King to have.

His politique wisdom in government was singular, his will quick and ready, his reason pithy and substantiall, his memory freshe and lasting, his experience notable, his counsayles fortunate and taken by wise delyberations, his speche gracyous in divers languages, his person goodly and amyable, his natural complexion of the purest mixture, his progeny faire and in good number. Lieges and confederates he had with all chrysten prynces, his wiewty power was dredde everywhere, not only within his realm but without also, his people were to hym in as humble subjection as ever they were to Kings. He

w many a day in peace and tranquility, his prosperity
 batayle against his enemye was marvellous, his dealing
 tyme of perils was cold and sober with great hardiness.
 If any treason were conspired aganst hym it came out
 ickly, his treasures and riches were incomparable, his
 ayldynges most goodly and after the newest castall of
 easure. But what is all this now to him? All is but
*fumus et umbra!*¹ a smoke that soon vanyshethe and a
 adow that some passeth away. Shall I prayse hym
 en for them? Nay forsoothe. The grete wyse man
 olon, when that the kyng Cræsus had shewene unto
 ym all the gloryous state and condition that he was in,
 touching the thyngs above-rehearsed, he would not
 firm that he was blessed for all that, but sayd
expectandus est finis (the end is to be abided and looked
 for), wherein he said full truth, albeit, peradventure not
 he intended. But verily a truth it is, if the end is
 together a goode end, and a gracyous consolation to
 e lyfe maketh all, and therefore Seneca in his epistles
 ith *bonam vitæ clausulam impone* (in any wise make a
 od conclusion of thy lyfe), which thyng I may confirm
 y holy letters. In the prophet Ezeckiel it is written
 d spoken by the mouth of God in this manner:—
Justitia justi non liberabit eum in quacumque die peccaverit,
Impietas impii non nocebit ei in quacumque die conversus
*erit ab impietate sua.*² That is to saye, if the righteous
 n have lyved never too vertuously, and in the end of
 lyfe committeth one deadly synn and so depart, all his
 ghtwyse dealing before shall not defend hym from
 rlastyng damnation; and in contrarywyse, if the

¹ Smoke and shadow.

² Ezeziel, chap. xxxiii. 12.

synfull man hath lyved ever so wretchedly in tymes past, yet in the end of his lyfe if he returne from his wickednesse unto God, it shall not hinder him being saved. Let no synner presume of this so as to contynue longer in his sin, for if such presume, scarce one amongst a thousand cometh to this grace but deth taketh them ; so let them beware. Also, let no man murmur agenst this, for this is the grete treasure of the mercy of Almightye God, and agenst such murmurs is sufficiently answered in the same place. For what should become of any of us were it not for this mercy, *Quis potest dicere mundum cor meum, innocens ego sum a peccato?* Who can saye, saith Ecclesiasticus, myne heart is clean, I am innocent and guiltless of synne? As he sayeth, no man may speke this word. When then all men have in their lyfe trespassed agenst Almighty God, I may well saye that he is gracyous who maketh a blessed ende, and to that purpose S. John in the Apocalypse sayeth, *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur* (Blessed are those which have made vertuous ende and conclusion of their lyfe in our Lord), which verily I suppose this most noble prynce hath done, the proof whereof shall stand in four poyntes. The first is a true turning of his soule from this wretched worlde unto the love of Almighty God ; second is a fast hope and confidence that he had in prayer ; thyrldy, a stedfast belief of Gōd and the Sacraments of the Chyrche ; fourth, in a dylygent asking of mercy in the time of need,—which four poynts be expressed in order in the fyrst part of this psalm. As to the first, at the beginning of Lent last passed, he called unto hym his confessor, a man of singular wysdom, learning, and

virtue, by whose assured instruction I speke this that I shall saye. This noble Prynce after his confession made with all dylygence and grete repentance, he proposed three thynges, that is to saye, a true reformacyon of all that were offycers and mynysters of his laws, to the intreat that henceforwards justice might truly and indifferently (impartially) be executed in all causes; another that the promotions in the Chyrche that were of his dysposyng shold from henceforth be dysposed to able men, such as were vertuous and well lerned; thyrd, that as touchynge the dangers and jeopardye of his lawes, for thynges done in tymes passed he would grant a pardon generally unto all his people, which three thynges he let (spared) not openly to speke to divers persons as dyd resort unto hym, and many a tyme unto his secret servantes he sayd that if it pleased God to send hym lyfe they should see hym a new changed man. Furthermore, with all humbleness he recognised the singular and many benefyts he had received of Almighty God, and with grete repentance and marvellous sorrow accused hymself of his unkyndness towards Hym, especially that he no more fervently had procured the honor of God, and that he had not more dylygently performed the will and pleasure of Hym. Wherein he promised by the grace of God an assured amendment. Who may suppose but that this man had veryly set his heart on love of God, or who may thynke that in his person may not be said, *Dilexi*, that is to saye, I have set my love on my Lord God? Kyng David that wrote this psalm, albeit he had been an adulterer and murderer also, yet with one word spekyng his heart was

changed, saying, *Peccavi*. This Kyng sayd and confessed it many tymes with grete sorrow and grete repentance, promising fully a grete amendmeut of all his lyfe : wherefore in his person it may also be sayd, *Dilexi*, that is to saye, I have turned my heart and love unto God.

The cause of this love was the fast hope that he always had in prayer. It is not unknown the studyous and desyrous mynde he had unto prayer, which he procured of Religious and Secular Churches throughout his realm. In all the Chyrches of England dayly a Collect was sayde for hym, besides, that on divers years about Lent he sent offerings for ten masses peculiar (particularly) to be sayd for hym. Over this was there in his realm no vertuous man that he might be credibly informed of, but he gave hym a contynuall remembrance yearly to pray for hym, some x merks, some xii, besides his yearly and dayly alms to the prysoners and others poore and needy, for which it may be thought undoubtedly that he had grete hope and confidence in prayer, which prayer and confidence therein, no doubt of, was cause of the very turnynge of his soule to the faste love of God. And for that he sayeth, *Dilexi quoniam exaudiet Dominus* (I have loved because I hoped that my Lorde shold graciously hear me). But what shall He hear? *Vocem deprecationis meæ*. The voice of a prayer speaketh it more audybly, a soft breth may not be herde from off his prayer; therefore was he holpen (helped) with all those that prayed with hym and for hym, and their prayers was as the prayse of Hym which was so grete that it must needs be herde. *Impossibile est multorum preces non exaudiri*, sayth S. Augustin, that is to say, the prayer of

many cannot but be herde. One of the kyngs of Judea, whose name was Manasses, after many grete abominations and outrages agenst Almighty God, as it appereth in the fourth book of Kynges and in the second of Paralipomenon, he prayed unto Hym for mercy with true repentance, and mercy was given unto hym. If then so grete a synner for his own prayers was herde of God, how may we doubt, how *can* we doubt, but where so grete a number prayeth for one, as dyd for our late Kyng and Sovereygne, but that all the number shall be herde?

The cause of his hope was the true belyef that he had in God, in His Chyrch, and in the Sacraments thereof, which he received all with marvellous devotion, namely, in the Sacrament of penance, the Sacrament of the auter, and the Sacrament of annealing.¹ The Sacrament of penance with a marvellous compunction and flow of tears, that for sometyme he wept and sobbed for the space of three-quarters of an hour. The Sacrament of the auter he receyved at mid Lent, and again upon Easter-daye, with so grete reverence that all that were present were astonished thereat, for at his first entrance into the closet where the Sacrament was, he took off his bonet, and he kneeled down upon his knees and crept forth devoutly till he came unto the place where he receyved the Sacrament. Two dayes next before his departynge he was of that feebleness that he might not receyve it agene, yet nevertheless he desyred to see the Monstrance wherein it was contayned. The good father, his confessor, in goodly maner as was convenyent brought it with hym. He with suete [sweet] reverence, with many knockings

¹ Anointing.

and betings of his brest, with a quick and lyvely countenance, with so desyrous a heart made his humble obeesance thereunto, and with so grete humblesnesse and devotion kyssed, not the selfe place where the blessed body of Our Lord was containned, but the lowest part of the foot of the Monstrance, that all that stood about him scarcely myght conteyne themselves from tears and wepynge. The Sacrament of anealyng when he well perceyved that he began utterly to fayle, he desyrously asked for, and heartyly prayed that it myght be admynstered unto hym, wherein he made ready, and offered every part of his body in order, and then as well as he myght for wekeness, turned hymself at everytyme, and answered in the suffrages thereof. That same day of his departure he herde masse of the glorious Vergin, the Moder of Chryst, to whom alwaye in his lyfe he had a singular and special devotion. The ymage of the crucifix many a tyme full devoutly he did behold, with grete reverence lyftyng up his hede as well as he myght, holdyng up his hands before it, and often embracing it in his arms, and with grete devotion kyssing it and beting often his brest? Who may thynke that in this manner was not veryly fayth? Who may thynke that in this manner of dealing he faythfully belyved that the ears of Almighty God was open unto hym and ready to hear hym cry for mercy and assyst hym unto these same sacraments which he so devoutly receyved, and therefore in his person it may be sayd: *Quia inclinavit aurem suam mihi.*

For the fourth poynt, which was a dylygent asking for mercy in the tyme of mercy, it followeth *Et in diebus*


meis invocabo, that is to saye, and in my days I have called for mercy. Whiche were his days? Verily, all the tyme of his lyfe. As long as a man lyveth in this mortal lyfe, and truly calleth upon Almighty God for mercy, he may trust assuredly to have it. So it appeareth by S. John in the Apocalypse, saying, *Et dedi illi tempus ut pœnitentiam ageret*, I have given hym tyme to repent him. And all this tyme Almighty God mercifully abydeeth the retourne of the synner to the entreat (end) that he may have mercy upon hym, as it is written in the prophet Isaiah—*Expectat Dominus ut misereatur vestri*. There is no part of his lyfe but a synner if he truly call for mercy he may have it. Wytness the prophet Ezechiel—*Impietas impii non nocebit ei, in quacumque die conversus fuerit ab impietate sua*. In what day soever the synner tourneth hym from his synne, his synne shall not noye (hurt) hym, moche rather than if he do it many days, specially those days that be to Almighty God most acceptable, as be the dayes of Lent of whom the chyrche redeth—*Ecce nunc tempus acceptabile ecce nunc dies salutis*. This is the tyme acceptable, these be the dayes of truth and mercy, then for the penytents the whole Chyrche maketh special prayer.

Wherefore it is verily to be trusted that so true a tournyng to the love of God, dispysyng this world, so fast a hope in prayer, so firm a belyeve in the Sacraments of the chyrche, and so devout a recogneysing of them, so many lyftyng up of his eyes, so many betyngs and knockyngs of his brest, so many syghs, so many tears, so many callyngs for mercy, by all that graycious tyme. by all the holy Sents with the help of the whole

London, in Flete Strete, at the sygne of the Sonne, by Wynkyn de Worde, prynter unto the most excellent pryncesse my lady the Kynge's grandame. The fyrste yere of the ragyne of our soverayne lorde, Kynge Henry the VIII.



NOTES REFERRING TO THE LADY MARGARET.

T was whilst Bishop Fisher was Fellow of the College and senior Proctor of the University that, being sent to the Court, then held in the outlying and picturesque suburb of Greenwich, he beheld for the first time the mother of Henry the Seventh, that able and learned lady, whose chosen friend and Confessor he afterwards became.

Like the unfortunate Catherine of Arragon, the Lady Margaret, whilst sedulously fulfilling the duties of her exalted station, appears to have led a life of saintly virtue. Beneath the costly attire which, by her position as the mother of the reigning Monarch, it befitted her to wear, she donned the rough and coarse garments of penance ; courtly and hospitable to all, meek and affable to her inferiors, humble amidst the pride and pomp of her exalted station, she was no less a heroine in the court of her son amidst the prosperity of her declining years, than when in the spring-time of her life as a child mother, or in the later prime of her womanhood, she learned the stern lessons of adversity ; for when a widow of fourteen, with the little Earl of Richmond in her arms, the horrors of a civil war raged around her, and when that son had grown to manhood she saw herself exiled and disgraced for designing his union with Elizabeth of York.

Heli sayd—"Thre thyngs there be that I moche dred, one is what tyme my soule shall depart out of my body ; another is, when I shall be presented before my Judge ; the third is, what sentence He shall give, wheder with me or agenst me."

If these holy Faders which had forsaken this world, and had lyved so virtuously, were in this fear, no marvel, then that this grete man, which had so moche worldly busyness and dayly occupyed in the causes thereof, no marvel though he were in so great fear ; and thereof he complayneth saying—*Et pericula inferni invenerunt me*, that is to say, "and the peryls of hell did find me."¹ Who will not make the remembrance of them before, and often set them before the eyes of his soule, they shall at the houre of dethe offer themselves in more terryble manner unto his mynde, even as ye see these wood dogges, these grete mastives that be tyed in chaynes, unto such as often visit them, they be more gentle and easy, but to the stranger which have none acquayntance with them, they raygeng and furyously gape and rise against them as if they would devour them.

Et pericula inferni invenerunt me.

Thirdly, touchynge worldly pleasures wherein men set

¹ "Whoso him bethoct
Inwardly and oft
How hard it was to flit
From bed unto the pit—
From pit unto pain
That ne'er shall cease again ;
He would not do one sin
All the world to win."

—Quoted in a note to Bp. Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Dying*.

grete part of their comfort, both in body and soule, he had then full lytle comfort, no pleasure in them, but rather dyscymfort and sorrow, all his goodly houses so richly deckt and apparelled, his walls and galleryes of pleasure, his gardens large and rich with knots curiously wrought, his orchards set with vines and trees, his marvellous riches and treasures, his metes and drynkes, were they never so dylygyntly prepared, myght not then help hym, so moche that long before his dethe his mete were to hym loathsome (were it never so delicate) that many a tyme he sayd, but only to follow counsayls he would not for all the world receyve it.

Wherein he well percevyed the miseryes of this wretched world ; lo, he had experience of that a long tyme before. The grete and wyse Solomon reported in his book of Ecclesiastes—*Cumque me convertissem ad universa opera, quae fecerant manus meae, et ad labores, in quibus frustra sudaveram, vidi in omnibus vanitatem et afflictionem animi.* That is to saye, when I turned my remembrance to all that I had ordained, and to the labours wherein I had laboured in vayne, I found in them all but vanyity and tormentyng of soule. This in conclusion our late King and Soverayne full truly then had lerned, and the vayne trouble and labours which many take for this wretched world wherein, as I sayd, full lytle pleasure then he had, but moche dyspleasure and sorrow. Wherefore it followeth in his complaynt, *tribulationem et dolorem inveni.*

The fourth parcel of his complaynt is a lamentable crye unto Almyghtye God for help and succour, for when he saw playnly that nowhere else was any succour

or comforte, and the cruel assaults of dethe were fierce and sharp agenst hym, the dangerous peryls to which he was exposed was importunately grevous, all this world and worldly pleasure was to hym unswete and full of dyspleasure ; therefore with all his myght and power he cryed upon the name of our Lord, for the which is promysed by S. Paul, *Omnis quicumque invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit*, that is to say, whosoever calls on the name of the Lord he shall be saved. He therefore full busyly, full earnestly, full studyously called upon that blessed name for succour and helpe, and so it followeth in the psalm, *Et nomen Domini invocavi*—O my blessed Jhesu, O my most mercefull Jhesu, O my Lord and Creator Jhesu, *O Domine, libera animam meam*. O my Lord, delyver my soule from this corruptyble body, delyver my soule from the myseries of this world, delyver my soule from these deadly paynes, delyver my soule from the bonds of synne, delyver my soule from my mortal enemies, delyver my soule from the dangers of everlasting dethe. *O Domine libera animam meam?* O my Lords and Maysters, let this pyteous and lamentable complaynt of hym that was late your Kyng and Soverayue, let it enter and synke into your hearts, and let Scripture thereunto move you.

Example hereof we have of the Gentiles. The cruel warryour Hannibal pytyed the dethe of his enemyes. He wept over Paulus Emillius, Tiberius, Gracchus, and Marcus Marcellus, when he saw their bodys lye ded before hym. And in holy writ also Kyng David when it was told unto hym the dethe of his enemyes at dyvers tymes, he wept ryght pyteously at the dethe of Saul,

Absalom, and Abner. If they so grete and noble so moche pytyed the dethe of their mortal enemyes, we shold moche rather pytye the dethe of our own Soverayne. But whereto reherse I this, when He that was Lord of all the world, our Savyour Chryste Jhesu, wept at the tombe of Lazarus when he had been buryed the space of four dayes, giving unto us all thereby an example of pytye.

If He that was the Kyng of all kyngs wept for the dethe of His subject so long after his buryall, what sholde we that be subjects do for the dethe of our Kyng and Soverayne, having yet the presence of his body amongst us? Forsooth, it should move us to shew pyty and compassion the rather upon hym. Ah, King Henry, King Henry, if thou were in lyfe again, many a one that is here present now wolde pretend a full grete pyty and compassion for thee. It is recorded in a book of Kyngs how a servant of Kyng David, whose name was Ethai, when his Lorde and Soverayne was in trouble, he wolde not forsake him, but answered playnly in this maner, saynge, *In quocumque loco fueris Domine mi rex, sive in morte, sive in vita, ibi erit servus tuus.*

That is to say, in what place soever thou shalt be my Lord, my King, in the same place shall thy servant be. A servant also of King Saul when he saw his Lord and Master dead, his sorrow was so grete that he slew himself incontynent. Alas! where is the true pyte and very compassyon gone, that sholde be in the hertes of men? These two personnes had so grete compassyon of their maysters, that they refused not to suffer the deth with them. How hard are our hertes, how stony, how flinty,

if we relent not with pyte and compassyon, hearing so lamentable a complaynt of our late Soverayne, and hearynge him so pyteously crye, saynge, *O Domine, libera animam meam*—O Lord, deliver my soule ! Let us helpe him at least with our prayers, beseechyng Almyghty God for His infynyte mercy to delyver his soule and to pardon it ; and as we procede on with our psalm, let us devoutly and affectually saye for his soule and for all crystian soules, one paternoster.

The thyrd part of this psalm treateth of comforte, which is containyd in four poyntes—fyrst, the Almyghty God is mercyfull ; second, that He hath taken him into His custody ; thyrd, that He hath delyvered hym from all evyles ; fourth, that henceforward he shall contynue in the gracyous favour of Almyghty God.

For the fyrst, it followeth, *Misericors Dominus, et justus: et Deus noster miseretur*—the Lord is merciful and just ; and our God shows mercy. Who is this Lord that is mercifull and ryghtwyse ? Who but our Savyour Cryst Jhesu, whiche of His infynyte mercy came into this worlde to dye for synners ? *Christus Jhesu venit in hunc mundum peccatores salvos facere*. Why then sayth He *Et justus*, that He is ryghtwyse also, that rather sholde make agenst the synner than for hym. Nay forsothe. The prophete and Kynge, Davyd, brought in this worde for hymselfe and not agenst hym. Two ways it maketh for the synner : one by reason of promyse made through out all Scrypture unto the penytent that wyll utterly forsake his synne. Our Lorde that is moost faste of His promyse wyll pardon the synner soo repentyng hymselfe, and soo truly reformyng, whiche thyng saynt

John playnly wytnesseth in his fyrst epystle. *Si confiteamur peccata nostra, et emundet nos ab omni iniquitate.* That is to saye, if we wyll acknowlege our synnes, the Lorde is faythfull and juste in His promyse to forgyve all our synnes, and make us cleane from all wyckedness. This is one waye. An other waye also it may make, and that is this: our Savyour Jhesu is *justus*, for He is innocent and gyltles; and therfore He is a convenyent means, a Fader, accordynge to the wordes of the same saynt John—*Si quis peccaverit advocatum habemus apud Patrem, Jesum Christum justum, et ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis, nostris non pro nostris tantum, sed etiam totius mundi.* That isto say, if we have synned let us not dispayre, for we have an advocate for us before God—our Savyour whiche is juste and without synne; and He shall be a means for our synnes, not for our own onely but for all the world's. Who may be thought a more convenyant advocate for synners than He that never dyd synne, than He that suffyciently hath payed for the ransome of synne His owne moost precyous blode and paynful and bytter dethe, than He that is the Sone of Almyghty God, and that before His owne Fader. But peradventure His Fader is harde, and straunge, and wyll not be moved. Nay forsothe, for rather the contrary He is full pyteous and full redy to have mercy. And therfore it followeth: *Et Deus noster miseretur*, and our God wyll have pyte and mercy, for the whiche Saynt Austyn sayth in his Boke De Penitentia—*Quæcumque necessitas peccatorem ad pænitentiam cogit, neque quantitas criminis, nec brevitæ temporis, nec enormitas sceleris, nec horæ extremitas si pura fuerit voluntatis mutatio, excludit a*

venia. That is to saye, what necessitye soever compell the synner to repentaunce, neyther the gretnes of his synne, nor yet the shortness of tyme, nor the enormyte of his trespasse, ne yet the uttermost houre of his lyfe shall exclude hym from pardon, yf so be that his wyll be clearly chaunged and tourned to God. This is then one grete comforte that our late Kynge and Soverayne maye have, and all those that bear hym true fayth and servyce. The second comforte that he was taken into the custodye of our Lorde followeth in the next verse—*Custodiens parvulos Dominus, humiliatus sum, et liberavit me.* Who that is in thraldome of synne is in full shrewed custody ; and yf he wolde be at liberte he must do as these prysoners doo that some tyme undermyne the walles, and crepe under them out at a strayte and narrow hole. And so they escape out of the custodye of prysone and come to theyer lyberte. In lyke wyse the synner must do ; he must undermyne the stronge walles of synne by true humblynge and lowynge of hymselfe, and make hymselfe lytell to the entent he may crepe out at the narowe hole from the daunger of synne, and so come into the lyberte of grace. For the whiche our Savyour sayed, *Nisi conversi fueritis et efficiamini sicut parvuli.* Unlesse ye be chaunged, and be made lytell, ye can not enter to lyberte. Saynt Anthony sawe by revelacyon that all the worlde was full of snares, and he asked this questyon: “Blessed Lord,” says he, “who shall passe these daungers?” It was answered hym—“*Sola humilitas.*” Onely humbleness and lowlyness. The Kynge Achab, of whome Scrypture sayeth that he dyde more dyspleasure unto God than all the Kynges of Israell

that were before his tyme, he dyde so grete ydolatry, he slewe so many prophetes, notwithstandinge so many wonderfull tokens and myracles that were shewed unto hym. Yet at the last, when the prophet Elias came to hym in message and thretened hym sore in the name of God, he began to repente hym, and to humble hymselfe in the syght of God; for the which incontynent Almyghty God sayd unto the prophet Elias—*Nonne vidisti humiliatum Achab coram me? quia igitur humiliatus est mei causa, non inducam malum in diebus ejus.* That is to say, “Dyd thou not see Achab humbled before me? I tell thee for that he by cause of me dyd so humble hymselfe, I shall not do that evyll that I purposed in his tyme to have done.” O syngular goodnesse and gentylness of Almyghty God! O mervaylous redynesse of Hym unto pyte and mercy? So soone as the synner can humble and make lytell hymselfe, so soon he setteth hym at liberte and taketh him into his custody. Therefore we may be gretely comforted in our late Kynge and Soverayne, which so moche humbled hymselfe before his deth: humbled hym unto God, humbled hym unto his confessour, humbled hym unto penaunces, humbled hym unto the sacrament of the auter, and to the other sacramentes, humbled hym unto the crucifyxe; and with a more humblenes and pacyence toke this sicknesse and every thyng in it, than he ever dyd before, to the mervayle of all that were about hym. Wherefore he now may saye to our and his comforte—*Custodiens parvulos Dominus, humiliatus sum; et liberavit me.* That is to saye, our Lord taketh into His custody the lytel and humble persones. I was humbled and He set

me at lyberte. The thyrde comforte is that he is now at rest, and the myseryes of this worlde hath escaped. What is in this lyfe but myserable vanyte? So he doth wytnesse that thereof had experyence at the full, he that had most haboundance of all worldly pleasures, I meen the Kynge Solomon, whiche sayd, *Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas: quid habet amplius homo de uniuerso labore suo, quo laborat sub sole?* That is to saye, vanyte of vanytees, and all is but vanyte! What hath any man more of all his labour and besynes under the sonne? Ah! my Lordes and maysters! that have this worldly wysdome, that study and employ your wyttes to cast and compasse this world, what have ye of all this besynes at the last, but a lytel vanyte? The spyder craftily spynneth her threds and curiously weveth and joyneth her webbe, but cometh a lytel blast of wynde, and dysapoynteth all togyder: to the which purpose Cicero, in his thyrde Boke De Oratore, maketh this exclamacyon, *O fallacem hominum spem fragilemque fortunam, et inanes nostras contentiones, quæ medio in spatio sæpe franguntur et corruunt.* O deceytfull hope of man and bryttell fortune, and vayne enforcements, which often breke and come to noughte, or ever they have entred halfe theyr course. Whiche thyng wysely consideryng, this noble prynce ordered hymselfe thereafter: let call for his sone, the Kynge that now is our governour and soverayne, endued with all graces of God and nature, and with as grete habyltees and lykelyhoodes of well doynge as ever was in Kynge, whose begynnynge is now so gracyous and so comfortable unto all his people, that the rejoyssynge in hym in maner shadoweth the sorrow

that else wolde have be taken for the deth of his fader. He called, I saye, unto hym, and gave hym faderly and godly exhortacion, commyttynge unto hym the laborous gouernaunce of this realm: and gaderinge his owne soule unto the true neste, comfortyng it and sayinge unto it, *Convertere anima mea in requiem tuam; quia Dominus benefecit tibi*.¹ Be tourned, my soule, into thy rest, for thy Lorde hath been benefycyall unto thee benefycyall at every tyme before, but now specyally by this moost gentyll and mercyfull callynge, by so large respyte and space gyvng of repentance, whereby he hath escaped so many dangers—dangers of everlastinge deth, dangers of everlastinge teres and wepyng, and dangers of fallynge agayne to synne. For the fyrst, it is sayd—*Quia eripuit animam meam de morte*. That is, fore He hath delyvered my soule from deth, both temporall and everlastyng, dangers of everlastyng wepyng and sorrow; for the whiche the good Fader Arsenius says unto his brethren: “Brethren,” sayd he, “eyther we must nedes wepe here with teres that wyll washe our soules, or elles after this with teres that wyll brenne bothe bodyes and soules. From these teres also he is delyvered, and therefore it followeth—*Oculos meos à lachrymis*. And myne eyes from

¹ Something similar is recorded of the Lady Margaret. “She was a person of great prudence, who was aware of the dangers of Royalty, when it falls to the lot of youth; and being about to leave the world, she, with many tears, entreated the Bishop (Fisher), though several excellent men were also present, to assist the King by his instructions and advice; and desired her grandson to have a deference for him, preferably to all others, as what would most contribute to his felicity both here and hereafter.”—Card. Poli Apol. ad Carolum v. Cæ.

teres. Thyrdly, from the dangers of fallynge to synne agayne. No man that lyveth here can be assured not to fall. And therefore Saynt Paule sayeth—*Qui stat, videat ne cadat*. He that standeth let him beware that he slydeth not, for the waye is slyppery; but those that be departed in the state of grace, be assured never to fall agayne. And for that it followeth—*Et pedes meos à lapsu*. The fourth and the last portion of his comforte, whiche is to be assured of contynuance in the favour of Almighty God, passeth all the other, of grete comforte it is unto the sorrowfull penytent that he hath a mercyfull Lorde and God. A grete comforte also that he is taken in his custodye. A greater yet that he is delyvered from so many evylles and perylles. But the greatest whiche surmounteth all others is to have the presence of that most blessyd countenance, and to be assured ever to contynue in that gracious favour, no tonge can express, no speche can declare, no herte can thynke, how grete, how farre passynge this comforte is. *Si decem mille gehennas quis dixerit, sayth Crysostome, nihil tale est quale est ab illa beata visione excidere, et osum esse a Christo*. If one colde thynke of the greef of 10,000 helles, all that is yet no thyng lyke to be excluded from that blessyd countenaunce, and to be hated of Cryst. If this greef be so excessyve and surpassynge, the contrary therof must nedes be of as extreme comforte and joy agayne; that is to saye, to have the contynuall presence of that blessyd syght, and to knowe the assured favoure and grace that he standeth in, for the whiche is sayd, *placebo Domino in regione vivorum*. That is to saye, I shall please my Lorde God

in the regyon and countre of lyvyng persones where in is the very lyfe ever contynued without ony interuption of deth.

Thus accordynge to my promyse at the begynnynge I have perused this psalm in the persone of this noble man : devydyng it in three partes, in a commendacyon of hym, in a movynge of you to have compassyon upon hym, and in a comfortynge of you agayne. The commendacyon stode in four poyntes : Fyrst, in a very tournyge of his love to God ; seconde, in a fast hope and confydence of prayer ; thyrde, in a stedfast beleve of the Sacramentes and a devoute receyvynge of them ; fourth, in a dylygent callynge for grace. The moving to compassyon stode also in iv. poyntes : fyrst, for the paynfull grievaunces of deth that he felte in his body ; seconde, for the fearfull remembraunce in his soule of the jugement of God ; thyrde, for the myserable vanytees of this lyfe, wherein he founde but payne and travayle ; fourth, for the lamentable crye to God for helpe and socour. The comfortynge agayne was lykewyse in iv. poyntes : fyrst, for that he hath so mercyfull a Lorde and God ; seconde, for that he is taken into His custody ; thyrde, for that he is now delyvered from so many perylls ; fourth, for that he shall from henseforwarde contynue in the gracyous favour of Almyghty God. The whiche comforte may He graunte hym who for us all dyed upon the crosse, our Savyour Cryst Jhesu. Amen.

Thus endeth this notable sermon. Enprinted at

London, in Flete Strete, at the sygne of the Sonne, by Wynkyn de Worde, prynter unto the most excellent pryncesse my lady the Kynge's grandame. The fyrste yere of the ragyne of our soverayne lorde, Kynge Henry the VIII.



NOTES REFERRING TO THE LADY MARGARET.



T was whilst Bishop Fisher was Fellow of the College and senior Proctor of the University that, being sent to the Court, then held in the outlying and picturesque suburb of Greenwich, he beheld for the first time the mother of Henry the Seventh, that able and learned lady, whose chosen friend and Confessor he afterwards became.

Like the unfortunate Catherine of Arragon, the Lady Margaret, whilst sedulously fulfilling the duties of her exalted station, appears to have led a life of saintly virtue. Beneath the costly attire which, by her position as the mother of the reigning Monarch, it befitted her to wear, she donned the rough and coarse garments of penance ; courtly and hospitable to all, meek and affable to her inferiors, humble amidst the pride and pomp of her exalted station, she was no less a heroine in the court of her son amidst the prosperity of her declining years, than when in the spring-time of her life as a child mother, or in the later prime of her womanhood, she learned the stern lessons of adversity ; for when a widow of fourteen, with the little Earl of Richmond in her arms, the horrors of a civil war raged around her, and when that son had grown to manhood she saw herself exiled and disgraced for designing his union with Elizabeth of York.

But to return to Dr. Fisher, let us hear what he himself says of Margaret Beaufort.

"She was," says he, "an excellent and incomparable woman. To me a mistress most dear on many accounts. Her merits wherein she has obliged me were very great. She loved me sincerely above others, with a great and uncommon love. She never thought she could exceed in kindness to me, and was most magnificent in my behalf, never failing by all the means in her power to increase my estate, and giving me abundant proofs of her love, not only in words but in deeds at the hour of her death."¹

And so in course of time these two noble souls accomplished great things together ; she with her wealth and generosity always coming forth readily to his aid whenever he required it.

It was on the feast of our Lady's Nativity, September 8, 1503, that she instituted a perpetual public lecture on Divinity in the University of Cambridge, appointing him her first reader, herself giving rules and statutes for his choice ; and for the due performance of the duties of his place she endowed this her lecture with twenty merks per annum, payable by the Abbot and Convent of Westminster, which house she had endowed with revenues to the amount of eighty-seven pounds a-year.²

It was originally the intention of the Countess Margaret to settle on this Abbey (in which she and her son Henry VII. intended to be buried) a large estate, for such uses as she should appoint, and with this

¹ Epistle dedicated to Dr. Fox.

² From five to six hundred pounds a year at the present value of money.

idea in view she had obtained from the King a license or faculty. But her intention met with no approval on the part of Dr. Fisher, for he besought the lady to let her charity flow into other channels, explaining to her that the Abbey of Westminster was already well-endowed and wealthy, for it was indeed one of the richest of the religious houses, whilst the Universities, and especially that of Cambridge, were yet but meanly endowed, but scant provision made for the professors and scholars, and Colleges were still wanting for their maintenance.

With her usual grace the Countess replied that she would gladly comply with his advice, but that there were difficulties in the way, as she was under engagements to the King respecting their common design at Westminster. She could not alter her plans without his consent, and she knew not how to ask it of him.

This, however, Dr. Fisher undertook of himself, and she having written a letter to persuade Henry to alter his design, he became its bearer, acquitting himself so well that he not only obtained what he and the Countess desired, but laid the foundation for his own promotion—such interest did the King instantly feel for the learned priest whom his mother had thus brought before his notice, that he gave Dr. Fisher a letter to the Countess, in which he tells her “that by her confessor, the bearer, he had received her good and most loving writing, and by the same had herde at good leisure such evidence as he would shew unto him in her behalf, and thereupon had sped him without delay according to her noble petition and desire, which rested in two chief points, the one to alter and change part of a license which he had

given unto her before for to be put into mortmain at Westminster, and was to be converted into the University of Cambridge, for her soul's health—all which things," continues the King, "according to her advice, he had with all his heart and goodwill granted unto her''¹

Henry having thus granted the petition of his mother, the Countess at once applied her charity to the wants of the University of Cambridge.

Some little time after the nomination of Dr. Fisher by virtue of the bull of Pope Julius II., dated at Rome, October 14, 1504, and his subsequent consecration at Lambeth, by Archbishop Warham, on the 24th of the following month, the Lady Margaret "avowed and confirmed to him her profession of chastity and obedience" in the following words: "In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christe, and His blessed mother the gloriouse Virgin Sent Marie, of the hole company of heven, and of you my ghostly father, I, Margarete Richmonde, with full purpos and deliberation for the well of my synfull soule, wyth all my hert promys from henceforth the chastitie of my body, the which thing I had before purposed in my lorde my husband's dayes, then being my gostly father, the bishoppe of Rochester, Mr. Richard Fitzjames, and now eftsoon I fully conferme it as far as in me lyeth, beseching my Lord God, that He will this my poor wyll accept, to the remedye of my wretched lyfe and releeve of my synfull soule. And that He will give me His grace to perform the same. And also for my more meryte and quyetness of my soule in dowtful thyngs pertenyng to the same, I avowe to you

¹ Ex Archives Coll. S. Joannis—Lewis's *Life of Fisher*, Ed. Turner.

my lorde of Rochester, to whom I am and hath bene, since the first tyme I see you, admytted, verely determined (as to my cheffe trustye counselloure) to owe myne obedyence in all thyngs concernyng the well and profite of my soule."

"It was a constant pious custom indeed for widows to make profession of chastity before the Bishop of the diocese in which they lived of their continuance in the state of widowhood, on which occasion they were solemnly blessed by the Bishop, and had a mantle and ring delivered to them by him, which they wore in token of their vow and profession.

"Accordingly, one Elizabeth Fitzwarren, a widow, was thus professed before the Bishop and received from him the mantle and ring in the parish church of Beckenham, near Bromley."

The form of her profession is thus entered in the Bishop's register:—

"In the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Goste, I, Elizabeth, a widowe, and not wedded, make a vowe to God, and to our blessed Ladie, and to all the companie of heven, in the presence of the reverend father in God, John, Bysshop of Rochester, for to be chaste of my bodie, and trewly and devowtly shall kepe me chaste from this tyme as long as my lyff lastith, after the rule of Saynt Pawll. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen. In cujus testimonium signum crucis cum nomine manu propria subscripsi.

"ELYSABETH."

Such a vow was that which was taken by the Lady Margaret some years before her death.¹

¹ Lewis's Ed. Turner, Vol. I., p. 42.

Hereafter followeth
A Morninge Remembrancer held at the months Mind
of the Noble Prynces Margarete, Countess of
Richmonde and Darbye, Moder unto
Kynge Henry the Seventh, and Gran-
dame to our Sovereign Lord
that now is, upon whose
soul Almightye
God have
Mercy.

Compyled by the Reverent Fader in God, Johan
Fysher, Byshop of Rochester.

Enprynted at London, in Flete Strete, at the Sygne
of the Soune, by Wynkyn de Worde.

Dixit Martha ad Jhesum.

This holy Gospel containeth in it a dyalogue, that is to say, a conversation betwixt the woman of blessed memory called Martha and our Savyour Jhesu, which dyalogue I would apply unto this noble Prynces late deceasyd, in whose remembrance this office and observance be done at this tyme. And thre things by God's leave I intend:—Fyrst, to show wherein this noble Prynces may well be likened and compared unto the blessed woman Martha.

Second, how she may complain unto our Savyour Jhesu for the paynful death of her body, lyk as Martha dyd for the dethe of her brother Lazarus. Thyrd, the comfortable answeare of our Savyour Jhesu unto her again. In the fyrst, that be her praise and commendacyon; in the second, our mournynge for the losse of her; in the thyrd, our comfort.

Fyrst, the comparison may be made in two thyngs. In noblenesse of person, in discipline of their bodys, in ordering of their souls to God. In hospytalytes kepyng and charitable dealing to their neighbors, in which the noble woman Martha (so say the Doctors) was singularly to be praised and commended. Wherefore let us consider lykewise whether in this noble countesse may anything like be founde.

First, the blessed Martha was a woman of noble blood, to whom by inheritance belonged the Castle of Bethany; and this noblenesse of blood they have which descend of noble lineage. Besides this, there is a nobleness of manner, without which that of blood is much effaced;

for, as Boetius sayeth, if aught be good in noble blood, it is that noble men and women sholde be ashamed to lapse from the vertuous manners of their ancestry.

Yet there is another noblenesse which ariseth in every person by the goodness of nature, whereby full often such as come of lowly fader and moder have great ability of nature to noble deeds. And, above all these, there is a fourth degree of nobleness, as by marriage and affinity of noble persons, so that such as were of lesse condition may increase in higher degree of noblenesse.

In each of these this countesse was noble. She came of noble blood, lyneally descendyng of King Edward the Third, within four degrees of the same. Her fader was John, Duke of Somerset; her moder was called Marguerite (right noble as well in manners as in blood), to whom she was a verye daughter, for she was bounteous and liberal to every person of her acquaintance. Avarice and covetyse she most hated, and sorrowed it full moche in all, but specially in any that belonged to her. She was of singular easiness to speak unto, and full courteous answere she would make to all that came to her. Of marvellous gentleness she was to all folk, but specially to her own, whom she loved and trusted ryght tenderly. Unkynd she would not be to any creature, nor forgetful of any service done to her, which is no small part of true nobleness. She was not revengeful nor cruel, but ready at once to forget and forgive injuries done unto her. Merciful also and pyteous she was unto such as was grieved and wrongfully troubled, and to them that were in poverty, syckness, or mysery.

To God and to the Chyrch most obedyent and tract-

able, serching His honour and pleasure full busily, a waryness of herself, she had always to eschew anything that might dyshonour any noble woman or stain her honor in any condition. Tryfling things little to be regarded she wold let pass by, but those that were weighty she wold not let for any payne or labour to take in hand. These and many other such noble conditions left her by her ancestors she encreased with great dylygence.

The third nobleness she lacked not, that of nature. She had in manner all that was praysable in woman, either in soul or body. She was of singular wysdom, farre passing the common rate of woman. She was good in remembrance and of memory. A redye will she also had to conceyve all things, albeit they were right dark. Right studious she was in bookes, of which she had a large number in Englishe, French, and Latin, and for her exercise and her profit she translated divers matters of devocyon out of French into Englishe. Full often she complained that in her youth she had not given her to the understandyng of Latin, wherein she had a little percevyng, specially of the Rubryshe of the Ordinall for the saying of her service, which she did well understand. Hereunto, in favour, in words, in gesture, in every demeanour of herself, so grete nobleness did appear that what she spake or dyd it marvellously became her.

¹ To her daughter Richmond a book of English, being a legend of Saints, a book of French, another of French of the Epistles and Gospels, and a Primmer with clasps of silver gilt, covered with purple velvet.—Duchess of Buckingham's will, who died, 20, Edward IV., quoted by Dugdale, Vol. i., p. 167.

The fourth degree she had also, for albeit she of her lyneage were right noble, yet natheless by marryage and adjoyning of other blood it took encrease, for in her tender age, she being endued with so great towardness of nature and lykelyhood of enheritance, many sued to have her to marryage. The Duke of Suffolke, which then was a man of great experience, most dylygently procured to have had her for his son and heyre. Of the contrary part, King Henry the Sixth did make means for Edmunde, his brother, then the Earl of Richmonde. She was as then not fully nine years old. Doubtful in her mynde what was best to do, she asked counsayle of an old gentlewoman, whom she much loved and trusted, which dyd advyse her to commend herself unto S. Nicholas, the patron and helper of all true maydens, and to beseche hym to put in her mind what she were best to do. This counsayle she followed, and made her prayer full often, but specially that nyght when she sholde the morrow after make answeere of her mind determinately. A marvayleous thyng ! that same nyght, as I have herde her tell many a tyme, as she lay in prayer callyng upon S. Nicholas, whether sleepynge or wakeynge she would not assure, but about four of the clock in the mornynge one appeared unto her arrayed lyke a Byshop, and naming unto her Edmunde, bad her take hym unto her husband ; and so by this means she did enclyne her mind unto the King's broder and Earl of Richmonde, and by whom she was made moder of the King that dede is (whose soule God pardon) and grandame to our Soveraigne Lord, Henry the VIII., which now by the grace of God governeth the realm.

So what by lyneage, what by affinite, she had several Kings and Queens within the four degrees of marriage unto her, besides Lords, Marquises, Dukes, and Princes.

Secondly, the blessed Martha is prayesd in chastysing her body by Christyen discipline, as in abstinence, fasting, sharp clothes wearing, chastytie, which thing albeit necessary to every Christyen person, yet it is much more to be prayesd in the Nobles, havynge this worldly libertye as it was in this noble princes late deceased, whom my purpose is not vainly to extol and magnify above her merits, but to edify others by her example. I would rehearse somewhat of her demeanour in thys respect. Her sober temperance in mete and drynke was observable by all that were conversant with her, wherein she lay in grete wait of herself as anyone might, kepynge always her strayghte measure, and offending as lytell as anyone could, eschewing banquets, rersonpers, and eating betwixt meals. As for fasting, for age and feebleness albeit she were not bound, yet on those days by the church appoynted she diligently and seriously, and in espescyal in the Holy Lent throweout, she restrayned her appetyte tyl one meal and one fische in the day, besyde her other peculiar fasts of devotion, as S. Anthony, Mary Maudelyn, S. Katheryne, with others, and throweout all the year the Friday and Saturday she full truely observed.

As to hard clothes wearynge, she had her shirts and girdles of hair, which when she was in helthe she everye weeke failed not on certain days to wear, so that full often her skin was pierced therewith. As for chastite though she continued not alway in her virgynity, yet in

her husband's days she opteeyned of him license and promysed to live chaste in the hands of the Reverend Fader, my Lord Bishop of London, which promise she renewed after her husband's dethe into my hands again, whereby the discyplyne of her body doth appear.

Thyrdly, the blessed Martha is commended in the order yng of her sowle to God by often kneelynges, by sorrowful wepynges, and by constant prayers and meditatyons, wherein this noble princes somewhat took her part.

In prayer every day at her uprysing, which commonly was not long after five of the klok, she began certain devocyons, and after them, with one of her gentlewomen, the matins of our Ladye, then she came into her closet, where, with her chaplain, she sayde also matins of the day, and after that dayle herd four masses on her knees, so contynuing in prayer untyl the hour of dyner, which on the etyng day was ten o'clock, and on the fasting day eleven.

After dyner full truely she would goe her stations to three aulters dayly, and dayly her derges and commendacyons she wold say, and her Evensong before souper, both of the days of our Ladye, besides many other prayers and psalters of David through the yeare, and at night before she went to bed she fayled not to resort unto her chappel, and a large quarter of an hour to engage her in devocyons. No marvel all this long tyme her knelynge was to her paynful, that many tymes it caused in her back payn and disease, nathelesse when she was in helthe she failed not to say the Crown of our Ladye, which containeth sixty and three Aves, and at

every Ave a knelynge, and as for meditatcyon she had divers bokes in French wherewith she occupied herselfe when weary in prayer, wherefor divers she dyd translate into Englishe.¹

Her marvellous weepyng they can bear wytness to who have herd her confessions, which used to be at many seasons of the yere, lyghtlye every thyrday, can record the same at many tymes when she was housylde, which was fully a dozen tymes a year, what floods of tears there issued from her eyes, she well might say, *Exitus aquarum deduxerunt oculi mei.*

Moreover, that all her works myghte be acceptable and of greater merite in the syghte of God, such godly thyngs she wold take by obedyence, which obedyence she promised to my Lord Byshop of London for the tyme of his being with her, and afterwards unto me, whereby it may appere the dylygent order of her sowle to God.

Fourthe, the holy Martha is magnified for godly hospytalyty and charitable dealyng to her neyghbors, muche busynesse there is in kepyng hospytalyty, therefore our Lord said unto her: *Martha, Martha, sollicita es, et turbaris erga plurima.* "Martha, Martha, why art thou troubled about many things?"

The household's servants must be put in good order, the strangers who of their courtesye resort to visit the Sovereaine must be considered, and the sutors also compelled by need to seek help must be herde, and the poor and needy specially releved and comforted.

Her own household with marvylous dylygence and

¹ The *Mirror of Gold*, with the fourth book of the *Following of Christ*. 1504. 4to.

wysdome this noble prynces ordered, providing reasonable ordinancs which by her officers she commanded to be read four tymes yearely, and often by herself encouraged them to do well, sometimes by other mean persons.

If any factions were made amongst her head officers, she with great policy dyd bolt it out, and if stryfe or controversy arose, with great discretion she studied the reformatyon.

For the stranger—oh, incomprehensyble God! what pain, what labor she of her very gentlenesse would take to bear them company, and entrete every persen and entertaen them according to their degree, and provyde that nothing sholde lack that myght be convenyent for them, wherein she had a wonderful remembrance and a perfect knowledge.

For sutors, it is known how carefully she procured justice to be admynistered by a long season, as long as she was suffered, and at her own charge provyded men learned for the purpose, evenly and indifferently to here all causes and admynyster ryght and justice to every one, they were in no small number, and mete and drynk was denyed to no one.

For the poor, albeit she did not receyve our Saviour into her own house as the blessyed Martha dyd, she nevertheless receyved them that doth represent His person, of whom He Himself saith: *Quamdiu fecistis uni ex his fratribus meis minimis, mihi fecistis.* "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to me."

Poor folks to the number of twelve she dayle and nyghtlye kept in her house, giving them lodgyng, mete,

and drynke, and clothyng, visitynge them often as she myghte and mynsteryng unto them with her own hands, and when it pleased God to call any of them out of this wretched world she wolde be present to see them dipart, and to lerne how to dye, and then bryng them unto the erthe, which, as S. Bonaventure affirms, is of gretter merite than if she had done it to the person of our Savyour Jhesu, and the servants and mynysters of our Lord whom she herd were of devocyon and vertue she was full glad at all tymes to get theym.

Suppose not ye that if she could have gotten our Savyour Jhesu she would not have mynstered as fervently unto Him as ever dyd Martha, when thus much she dyd to His servants for His sake.

And now as to the lamentation that the sowle of this princes myght make for the dethe of her body, oftentimes in Scripture the holy faders make sorrowful exclamacyons to God, for that He seemeth more indulgent to the wicked than to the good lyver. The prophet David sayeth: *Quia zelavi super iniquos, pacem peccatorum videns. Quia non est respectus morti eorum, et firmamentum in plaga eorum.* Because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked seeing the prosperity of sinners, for there is no regard to their death, nor *is their* strength in their stripes. Jeremias also sayeth: *Quare via impiorum prosperatur, bene est omnibus, qui prævaricantur et inique agunt?*¹ And sayeth the prophet Habacuc: *Quare respicis super iniqua agentes, et taces devorante impio justio rem se?*² and also

¹ "Why doth the way of the wicked prosper? why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly?"

² "Why lookest thou upon them that do unjust things, and holdest thy peace when the wicked devoureth the man that is more just than himself?"

holy Job : *Quare ergo impii vivunt, sublevati sunt, confortatique divitiis.*¹

The reason that thus moveth them to murmur may be this. There is in God two virtues which are specially magnified throughout Scripture—Mercy and Ryghteousness ; both of these shold move Hym to be favorable to the good rather than to the bad. His mercy shold move hym to have pytye and compassyon, wherefor it may be thought that God which of His own property is reddy to give mercy, shold rather shew it to the good than to the wicked, also His ryghteousness should incline Hym to give unto every one according to their deserts. But the good deserveth rather of their goodness to have mercy shewn them, wherefore the holy faders seeing in this world the wycked in prosperity and the good in trouble, make these exclamacyons and cry on God as if He were asleep : Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord, and forgettest our want and our trouble. *Dixit insipiens in corde suo : Non est Deus.*² Some weeneth at the leest He is absent, and asketh, “Where He is, *Ubi est tuus Deus ?*” In this condycyon was the blessed Martha, she knew our Savyour was merciful and shewed His goodness to all, she believed faythfully that if He had been present at the dethe of Lazarus, whom He loved moche, He wolde not have suffered him to dye, therefore she said : *Domine, si fuisses hic, frater meus non fuisset mortuus.*³

And so the soule of this princes, which had the body

¹ “Why then do the wicked live, are they advanced and strengthened in riches ?”

² “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God.”

³ “Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not dyed.”

joined to it in favor and love as sister and broder, might complain for dethe of the body since it had been occupied in the service of God, her eyes in tears of devocyon or repentance, her ears hering the word of God dayly in her chapel with prests, clerks, and children, her tongue in prayer moche part of the day, her feet in visiting the alters and holy places, her hands in giving alms to the poor and needy, dressing them when syck and giving them to eat, those mercyful hands to endure the cramp, and gryevously compellying her to cry: "Oh, blessed Jhesu, help me! Oh, blessed Lady, succour me!"

Like a spear it pierced the hearts of her servants, but specially when they saw dethe haste upon her, that she must dipart, and they give up their gentle mistress and tender lady, then wept they, then wept her ladies and kinswomen, her poor gentlewomen whom she had loved tenderly, her chamberlains to whom she was dere, her chaplains and prests, and her true and faythful servants.

All England for her dethe had cause to weep, the poor that were wont to receive her alms, the students of both Unyversyties to whom she was as a moder, the learned men of England to whom she was a patroness, the vertuous and devout to whom she was as a loving syster, the Relygious men and women whom she was wont to help, the prests and clerks to whom she was a defender, the noblemen and women to whom she was a mirror and example, and all the common people to whom she was a common mediatrix, and whom the whole realm hath cause to mourn, and trully may we say lamentably complaining in our unwysdom—*Ah! Domine, si fuisscs hic.*

Ah, Lord, if Thou hadst been here and herd the sor-

rowful cry of her, Thy servant, and the lamentable moaning of her friends, then of Thy goodness Thou wouldst not have suffered her to dye. It followeth by the mouth of Martha—*Sed et nunc scio, quia quæcumque poposceris à Deo, dabit tibi Deus.* Whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give it thee. Who may doubt then but that the Son of God, of whom S. Paul says, was herd for His reverence when, in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears He offered up prayers and supplications to Hym that was able to save Hym from death, shall moche rather now be herd when He is gloryfied in heaven. If in His mortal body He prayed and asked forgiveness for His enemies, moche rather may we suppose He shall opteyne His asking for her that had such compascyon for His blessed passion as dyd this noble princes. He prayed undesyred of any, and let not so to do for the pains He suffered, now therefore being in great glory above, if we all call on Hym by prayer for the soule of one who was His faithful servant, who can doubt but that of His infinite goodness He will have mercy ; we will not crave Hym then to restore lyfe to her body as He dyd with Lazarus, we must be content with its dethe and learn to prepare our own bodies for the same end shortly, but we will beseache Hym to accept that swete soule to His great mercy, to be a partaker of eternal lyfe with Hym and His Saints, which I pray you all effectually to pray, and for her most devoutly to say one paternoster.

Ye have herd the goodly condition of this noble princes whom we have resembled to the blessed Martha, ye have herd the piteous complaint of her soule for the

dethe of her body made to our Savyour, now will I call to mind the answer of our merciful Savyour, whereof we may all be comforted—"Jhesu said unto her, Thy broder shall rise again".

I said before, that consydering the love between soul and body, they are as broder and syster, and have a natural desire to be united again, which not only theologians bear witness to, but philosophsers also.

A grete comfort then it is unto the soule to here that the body shall rise again, especially in the manner of rising as S. Paul saith—"Sown in corruption it shall rise in incorruption".

First, when layde in the ground it corrupts, the ground moisteneth it, worms do breed and fede of it, it is vile and lothely to behold, and right ungoodly to the syght, it hath no power to styr, it is so gross that it occupieth a room, and letteth other bodies be present in the same room; but agenst these conditions which the body hath when layde in the ground, the bodies of them that shall be saved shall possess four gifts. The fyrst shall be that neyther the air, ne water, ne fire, ne knife, ne weapon, ne stroke shall annoy it; second, it shall rise bryght and gloryous in the most goodly and beauteous manner; thyrd, it shall be more nymble and reddy to be conveyed wherever the soule may have it than is any swallow to fly; fourth, it shall be so subtile that it shall pierce through stone walls, there shal be a farre difference and a grete diversity of the body as the sowle had it before, and as she shall receive it again; but yet me thinks I see what the soule of this princes may say somewhat to minish this discomfort, after the manner

Martha did answer to Jhesu—*Scio quia resurget in resurrectione in novissimo die*. The hope of a thing delayed tormenteth the soule meanwhile ; therefore our Lord announceth again, *Ego sum resurrectio et vita*. I am the cause of the raysing of the body, as I am the veray cause of lyfe to the soule, as one who says, though the rysing of the body be delayed for a season, the soule nevertheless for the meantyme shall have a pleasant lyfe, a lyfe full of comfort, a lyfe of joy and pleasure, a lyfe void of sorrow, a lyfe not lyke the lyfe of this wretched worlde, which is mixed with moche bitterness, sorrow, drede, or peryl. It is impossible to lyve in this world and not to sorrow, not to fere. This Princes if she had lived on, sholde dayly have had cause of, and seen matter for, sorrow. Her body would have waxed unwieldy, her sight be darkened, her hearing have fayled, her legs grown weak, and all other parts of her body have waxed more crazed every day ; and albeit these thynges had not befallen her, yet she shold have lyved in dred.

Dare I say of her she never yet was in that prosperity, but the greter it was the more she dred adversyty, for when the King her son was crowned in all that tryumph and glory she wept moche, and also at the tryumph of the marriage, and at the last coronacyon wherein she had joy, she let (scrupled) not to saye that adversyty wolde follow, so that either she was in sorrow by reason of present adversyty, or in prosperity was in drede of adversyty to come. I pass over the peryls that might have happened her, whereof this lyfe is full, for, as S. Gregory sayeth, “who that once hath tasted the

pleasures of this lyfe, it is unto them a veray dethe ever after”.

Example of Lazarus, which after he was restored to the myseries of this lyfe he never laughed, but was always pensyve. I ask you one question—Were it, all thyngs considered, a metely thyng to desyre to have her agayne amongst us? To forego the joyous lyfe above, to miss the presence of the glory ous Trynity, toleve that most noble kyngdom, to be absent from the blessyd company of the Saints, and to come hyther again to be with thys wretched worlde and bear the paynful dysease of age—were this a just request, a kynd desyre, a gentle wyshe, that she who hath been lovyng and kynd to us, that we sholde more regard our profit than her happyness? The moder that shall so love her son that she wyll not suffer him to leve her for his own promocyon, more regarding her own pleasure than his weal, were she not an ungratfull moder? Yes, veryly! Let us therefore thynke our loving Maisstress is gone for her promotion, her furtherance, her weal and profit, and comfort ourselves, and rejoyce and thanke God, who hath so graciously disposed for her.

But ye will saye—If we were *sure*, we wolde not be sorry, but right hertyly glad and joyous; but as for surety, that can be had only in the revelacyon of God. Nevertheless, as farre as we *can* be sure, in the end of this Gospel, a strong argument is made by our Lord, namely, that he who puts full trust in Chryst Jhesu, albeit he be dead in body, shall have lyfe in the soule, and that lyfe that shal never end.

Now this princes put full trust in Chryst, veraly

belyevyng He was the Son of God, who came here to save sinners, whereof it follows that though her body be ded her soule is in the joyous lyfe that shal never end ; who that trusteth, albeit they be ded in their bodies, that have lyfe in their soules. But yet we want a little, I sayd, more than this. I sayd that lyfe shall never ende, and for this it followeth—*Qui credit in me, etiam st mortuus fuerit, vivet: et omnis qui vivit, et credit in me, non morietur in aeternum.* That is to say, that every person that hath this trust in Jhesu shall never dye. This princes had full fayth in Jhesu. If any one will ask this question of her that our Lord put to Martha, *Credes hoc*, Believest thou this ?

What is that that she wold not believe ? She that ordeyned two contenuall Readers in both Unyversityes to teach the dyvinity of Jhesu, she that ordeyned perpetuall preachers to publish his fayth and doctrine, she that buylded a Royal College to the honour of the name of Chryst ; besides all this founded in the Monastery of Westmynster, where her body lieth, three Prests to pray for her perpetually ; she whom I have herd saye that if the Chrystyen Princes warred on the enemies of His fayth, she wold go, follow the host, and wash their clothes, for love of Jhesu ; she, that witness this at the hour of her dethe, as many can record, how hertily she answered when the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's body was holden before her, the question made untill her, if she believed veraly there was the Son of God that suffered His blessyd Passyon for her and all mankynd, full many can record how with all her heart she raysed her body to make answer, and confessed that in that

Sacrament was containyd Chryst the Son of God, in whom she put her trust, in those same words almost that Martha confessed in the end of the Gospel, "I have believed that thou art Chryst, the Son of the living God".

And so soon after she was annealed, she departed and gave up her sperit in the hands of God.

Who may not trust then that the soule of this noble woman, whose lyfe was studiously occupied in good works and with a fast fayth in Chryst and His Sacraments, was defended in the hour of her departure from temptacyon, and that her body was borne up to the realms above? For if the prayers of many, if her own prayers in her lyfetye, if the Sacraments, if indulgences granted by divers Popes, if true tears and fayth, and devocyon in Chryst, if charity to her neighbors, pity to the poor, forgiveness of injuries, if good works be available, and doubtless they are, grete likelihood and certain conjecture we may take by all of them that so it is indede. Therefore put aside teers and weeping; be not sad as men without hope, rather be glad and joyous, praysyng and magnyfyng the name of the Lord, to whom be all honor aud glory. Amen.

Thus ended this lamentable mornynge. Emprynted at London, in Flete Strete, at the synge of the Sonne, by Wynkyn de Worde.

BP. FISHER'S LETTER TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS, ABOUT THE BILL BROUGHT INTO THAT HOUSE FOR ATTAINTING HIM AND OTHERS FOR THEIR BEING ABETTORS OF THE NUN OF CANTERBURY, COMMONLY CALLED THE HOLY MAID OF KENT.¹

MY LORDS!

After my most humble commendations unto all your good Lordships, that sit in this most High Court of Parliament; I beseech in like manner to hear and to tender this my suit which by necessity I am now driven to make unto all your Lordships in writing, because I may not by reason of disease and weakness at this time be present myself before you; without peril of destruction of my body, as heretofore I have written to Mr Cromwell; which gave me *no* comfort to obtain of ye King's Grace respite for my absense till I be recovered. If I might have been present myself, I doubt not ye great weakness of my body, with other manifold infirmities, wou'd have moved you much rather to have pity of my cause and matter, whereby I am put under this grievous trouble.

So it is my good Lords, that I am inform'd of a certain Bill that is put into this High Court against me and others concerning the matters of ye Nun of Canterbury; which thing is to me no little heaviness, and most specially in this piteous condition yt I am in.

Nevertheless, I trust in your Honours wisdoms and

¹ Collier's Eccles. Hist. Vol. II.

consciences that you will not in this High Court, suffer any act of condemnation to pass against me ; till my cause may be well and duly heard. And therefore in my most humble wise, I beseech all you my Lords in ye way of charity, and for ye love of Christ, and for ye mean season, it may please you to consider, that I sought not for this woman's coming unto me ; nor thought in her any manner of deceit. She was ye person that by many probable and likely conjectures, I then reputed to be right honest, religious, and very good and virtuous. I verily suppos'd that such feigning and craft, compassing of any guile or fraud had been far from her. And what default was this in me so to think, when I had so many probable testimonies of her virtue ?

First. The bruit of the country which generally call'd her *ye Holy Maid*.

Secondly. Her entrance into religion upon certain visions which was commonly said that she had.

Thirdly. For ye good religion and learning that was thought to be in her ghostly father and in other virtuous and well learned priests that then testified of her holiness, as it was commonly reported.

Finally. My Lord of Canterbury, that then was both her ordinary and a man reputed of high wisdom and learning, told me that she had many great visions. And of him I learn'd greater things than ever I heard of ye nun herself. Your wisdoms, I doubt not, here see plainly that in me there was no default to believe this woman to be honest, religious, and of good credence.

For sith then I am bounden by ye law of God to believe ye best of every person, until the contrary be

Martha did answere to Jhesu—*Scio quia resurget in resurrectione in novissimo die.* The hope of a thing delayed tormenteth the soule meanwhile ; therefore our Lord announceth again, *Ego sum resurrectio et vita.* I am the cause of the raysing of the body, as I am the veray cause of lyfe to the soule, as one who says, though the rysing of the body be delayed for a season, the soule nevertheless for the meantyme shall have a pleasant lyfe, a lyfe full of comfort, a lyfe of joy and pleasure, a lyfe void of sorrow, a lyfe not lyke the lyfe of this wretched worlde, which is mixed with moche bitterness, sorrow, drede, or peryl. It is impossible to lyve in this world and not to sorrow, not to fere. This Princes if she had lived on, sholde dayly have had cause of, and seen matter for, sorrow. Her body would have waxed unwieldy, her sight be darkened, her hearing have fayled, her legs grown weak, and all other parts of her body have waxed more crazed every day ; and albeit these thynges had not befallen her, yet she shold have lyved in dred.

Dare I say of her she never yet was in that prosperity, but the greter it was the more she dred adversyty, for when the King her son was crowned in all that triumph and glory she wept moche, and also at the tryumph of the marriage, and at the last coronacyon wherein she had joy, she let (scrupled) not to saye that adversyty wolde follow, so that either she was in sorrow by reason of present adversyty, or in prosperity was in drede of adversyty to come. I pass over the peryls that might have happened her, whereof this lyfe is full, for, as S. Gregory sayeth, “who that once hath tasted the

pleasures of this lyfe, it is unto them a veray dethe ever after”.

Example of Lazarus, which after he was restored to the myseries of this lyfe he never laughed, but was always pensyve. I ask you one question—Were it, all thyngs considered, a metely thyng to desyre to have her agayne amongst us? To forego the joyous lyfe above, to miss the presence of the glory ous Trynity, toleve that most noble kyngdom, to be absent from the blessyd company of the Saints, and to come hyther again to be with thys wretched worlde and bear the paynful dysease of age—were this a just request, a kynd desyre, a gentle wyshe, that she who hath been lovyng and kynd to us, that we sholde more regard our profit than her happyness? The moder that shall so love her son that she wyll not suffer him to leve her for his own promocyon, more regarding her own pleasure than his weal, were she not an ungratfull moder? Yes, verily! Let us therefore thynke our loving Maisstress is gone for her promotion, her furtherance, her weal and profit, and comfort ourselves, and rejoyce and thanke God, who hath so graciously disposed for her.

But ye will saye—If we were *sure*, we wolde not be sorry, but right hertyly glad and joyous; but as for surety, that can be had only in the revelacyon of God. Nevertheless, as farre as we *can* be sure, in the end of this Gospel, a strong argument is made by our Lord, namely, that he who puts full trust in Chryst Jhesu, albeit he be dead in body, shall have lyfe in the soule, and that lyfe that shal never end.

Now this princes put full trust in Chryst, veraly

belyevyng He was the Son of God, who came here to save sinners, whereof it follows that though her body be ded her soule is in the joyous lyfe that shal never end ; who that trusteth, albeit they be ded in their bodies, that have lyfe in their soules. But yet we want a little, I sayd, more than this. I sayd that lyfe shall never ende, and for this it followeth—*Qui credit in me, etiam st mortuus fuerit, vivet: et omnis qui vivit, et credit in me, non morietur in aeternum.* That is to say, that every person that hath this trust in Jhesu shall never dye. This princes had full fayth in Jhesu. If any one will ask this question of her that our Lord put to Martha, *Credes hoc*, Believest thou this ?

What is that that she wold not believe ? She that ordeyned two contenuall Readers in both Unyversityes to teach the dyvinity of Jhesu, she that ordeyned perpetuall preachers to publish his fayth and doctrine, she that buylded a Royal College to the honour of the name of Chryst ; besides all this founded in the Monastery of Westmynster, where her body lieth, three Prests to pray for her perpetually ; she whom I have herd saye that if the Chrystyen Princes warred on the enemies of His fayth, she wold go, follow the host, and wash their clothes, for love of Jhesu ; she, that witness this at the hour of her dethe, as many can record, how hertily she answered when the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's body was holden before her, the question made untill her, if she believed veraly there was the Son of God that suffered His blessyd Passyon for her and all mankynd, full many can record how with all her heart she raysed her body to make answer, and confessed that in that

Sacrament was containyd Chryst the Son of God, in whom she put her trust, in those same words almost that Martha confessed in the end of the Gospel, "I have believed that thou art Chryst, the Son of the living God".

And so soon after she was annealed, she departed and gave up her sperit in the hands of God.

Who may not trust then that the soule of this noble woman, whose lyfe was studiously occupied in good works and with a fast fayth in Chryst and His Sacraments, was defended in the hour of her departure from temptacyon, and that her body was borne up to the realms above? For if the prayers of many, if her own prayers in her lyfetyme, if the Sacraments, if indulgences granted by divers Popes, if true tears and fayth, and devocyon in Chryst, if charity to her neighbors, pity to the poor, forgiveness of injuries, if good works be available, and doubtless they are, grete likelihood and certain conjecture we may take by all of them that so it is indede. Therefore put aside teers and weeping; be not sad as men without hope, rather be glad and joyous, praysyng and magnyfying the name of the Lord, to whom be all honor aud glory. Amen.

Thus ended this lamentable mornynge. Emprynted at London, in Flete Strete, at the syng of the Sonne, by Wynkyn de Worde.

BP. FISHER'S LETTER TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS, ABOUT THE BILL BROUGHT INTO THAT HOUSE FOR ATTAINTING HIM AND OTHERS FOR THEIR BEING ABETTORS OF THE NUN OF CANTERBURY, COMMONLY CALLED THE HOLY MAID OF KENT.¹

MY LORDS!

After my most humble commendations unto all your good Lordships, that sit in this most High Court of Parliament; I beseech in like manner to hear and to tender this my suit which by necessity I am now driven to make unto all your Lordships in writing, because I may not by reason of disease and weakness at this time be present myself before you; without peril of destruction of my body, as heretofore I have written to Mr Cromwell; which gave me *no* comfort to obtain of ye King's Grace respite for my absense till I be recovered. If I might have been present myself, I doubt not ye great weakness of my body, with other manifold infirmities, wou'd have moved you much rather to have pity of my cause and matter, whereby I am put under this grievous trouble.

So it is my good Lords, that I am inform'd of a certain Bill that is put into this High Court against me and others concerning the matters of ye Nun of Canterbury; which thing is to me no little heaviness, and most specially in this piteous condition yt I am in.

Nevertheless, I trust in your Honours wisdoms and

¹ Collier's Eccles. Hist. Vol. II.

consciences that you will not in this High Court, suffer any act of condemnation to pass against me ; till my cause may be well and duly heard. And therefore in my most humble wise, I beseech all you my Lords in ye way of charity, and for ye love of Christ, and for ye mean season, it may please you to consider, that I sought not for this woman's coming unto me ; nor thought in her any manner of deceit. She was ye person that by many probable and likely conjectures, I then reputed to be right honest, religious, and very good and virtuous. I verily suppos'd that such feigning and craft, compassing of any guile or fraud had been far from her. And what default was this in me so to think, when I had so many probable testimonies of her virtue ?

First. The bruit of the country which generally call'd her *ye Holy Maid*.

Secondly. Her entrance into religion upon certain visions which was commonly said that she had.

Thirdly. For ye good religion and learning that was thought to be in her ghostly father and in other virtuous and well learned priests that then testified of her holiness, as it was commonly reported.

Finally. My Lord of Canterbury, that then was both her ordinary and a man reputed of high wisdom and learning, told me that she had many great visions. And of him I learn'd greater things than ever I heard of ye nun herself. Your wisdoms, I doubt not, here see plainly that in me there was no default to believe this woman to be honest, religious, and of good credence.

For sith then I am bounden by ye law of God to believe ye best of every person, until the contrary be

proved ; much rather I ought so to believe of this woman, that had then so many probable testimonies of her goodness and virtue. But here it will be said, that she told me such word as was to ye perill, of ye prince and of ye realm. Surely I am right sorry to make any rehearsal of her words, but only that necessity so compells me now to do.

The words that she told me concerning ye peril of the King's Highness were these : she said that she had her revelation from God, that *if ye King went forth with ye purpose that he intended, he shou'd not be King of England seven months after* ; and she told me also, that she had been with ye King and shew'd unto his grace ye same revelation.

Tho' this was forg'd by her or any other, what default is mine, that knew nothing of that forgery ? If I had given her any counsel to ye forging this revelation, or had any knowledge that it was feigned, I had been worthy great blame and punishment. But whereas I never gave her any counsel to this matter, now knew of any forging or feigning thereof, I trust in your great wisdoms that you will not think any default in me touching this point.

And as I will answer before ye throne of Christ, I knew not of any malice or evil that was intended by her, or by any other earthly creature unto ye King's Highness : neither her words did so sound that by any temporal or wordly power, such thing was intended, but only by ye power of God, of whom, as she then said, she had this revelation to shew unto ye King.

But here it will be said, that I shou'd have shew'd ye

words unto ye King's Highnesse. Verily if I had not undoubtedly thought that she had shew'd ye same words unto his Grace, my duty had been so to have done. But when she her self, which pretended to have had this revelation from God, had shew'd the same ; I saw no necessity why that I shou'd renew it again to his Grace. For her esteem'd honesty, qualified, as I said before, with so many probable testimonies, affirming unto me that she had told ye same unto ye King, made me right assuredly to think, that she had shewed ye same words to his Grace. And not only her own saying thus persuaded me, but her prioress's words confirmed ye same, and their servants also reported to my servants that she had been with ye King. And yet besides all this, I knew it, not long after that so it was indeed. I thought therefore that it was not for me to rehearse ye Nun's words to ye King again, when his Grace knew them already, and she her self had told him before. And surely divers other causes dissuaded me so to do, which are not here openly to be rehears'd. Nevertheless, when they shall be heard, I doubt not but they will altogether clearly excuse me as concerning this matter.

My suit therefore unto all you, my Honourable Lords, at this time is, that no act of condemnation concerning this matter be suffered to pass against me in this High Court before that I be heard, or else some other for me ; how that I can declare myself to be guiltless herein.

And this I most humbly beseech you all, on your charitable goodnesses, and also if that peradventure in ye mean time there shall be thought any negligence in me for not revealing this matter unto ye King's High-

ness, you for the punishment thereof which is now past, ordain no new law, but let me stand unto ye laws which have been heretofore made unto ye which I must and will obey.

Beseeching always ye King's most noble Grace, that ye same his laws may be minister'd unto me with favour and equity, and not with ye strictest rigour. I need not here to advise your most high wisdoms to look up to God, and upon your own souls in ordaining such laws for the punishment of negligences, or of other deeds which are already past, nor yet to look upon your own perils which may happen to you in like cases. For there sits not one lord here but ye same, or other like may chance unto himself that now is imputed unto me.

And therefore eftsoons I beseech all your benign charities to tender this my most humble suit as you wou'd be tender'd if you were in ye same danger your selves : And this to do for ye reverence of Christ for ye discharge of your own souls, and for ye honour of this most High Court : And finally for your own sureties, and others that hereafter shall succeed you, For I verily trust in Almighty God that by ye succour of his grace, and your charitable supportations, I shall so declare myself, that every nobleman that sits here, shall have good reason to be therewith satisfied. Thus our Lord have you all, this most Honourable Court, in his protection. Amen.

LETTER FROM CROMWELL TO THE ENGLISH AMBAS-
SADOR AT THE COURT OF FRANCE.

“ Sir, after my most hertie recommendacions these shalbe to advertise you the xvijth day of this moneth I receyved from you by your servaunte a paket of lettres which indelayedlie I delyvered to the Kinges highnes, and conferred with his grace the effects both of your lettres and all others within the saide packet, being dyrected as well to his highnes as to me. And after his highnes had with me perused the hole contentes thoroughe of your saide lettres, perceyvyng not onelie the likelyhod of the not repayre thither into Fraunce of Philip Melancton, but also your comunicacions had with the Frensh King uppon your demaunde made of the Kinges highnes pencions, with also your discrete answers and replicacions made in that behalf, for the which his Majestie gyveth unto you his hertie and condigne thanks, ye shalle understonde that his highnes comaunded me to make you answer in this wise folowing. First as touching the Kinges money his highnes doubteth not but seeng both the Frensh kyng and also the gret maister hathe promysed you it shalbe dispeched, ye wille as the case shall requyre not ceasse to call uppon them till it be despeched. And fether considering that the saide Frensh King uppon your saide demaund of the said pencions so sodaynelie fell into communicacyone with you aswell of his ffrendship and humanyte shewed to the Kinges highnes, alledging that

he at all tymes hathe answered for the Kinges highnes and specyally when he was last at Marcelles with Pope Clement, with other thinges as in your saide lettres appereth, as also concerning thexecucyons lately don here within this realme, the Kynges highnes somewhat mervaileth thereat and thinketh it good that, *as of yourself*, ye take som occasion at convenyent tyme and oportunyte to renovate the saide comunicacion both with the Frensh Kyng or at the lest with the grete maister, sayeng unto them that where the saide Frensh King alledgeth that he hathe at all tymes answered for the Kynges highnes in his cause, and specyally with the saide Pope Clement at Marcelles, affirmyng his procedinges to be just and upright concerning the matrimony, as ye do wryte, Albeit the Kynges highnes procedinges in all his affairs within this realme being of suche equitye and justnes of themself as they bee, nedeth not the defence or assistance ageynst Pope Clement or any other foreyn power, having Goddes worde and lawes onely sufficient to defende hym, [with thopynyons of the moste famous clerkes of Christendome],¹ yet in that the saide Frensh Kyng hathe as he sayeth answered at all tymes on the Kinges parte, he hathe done nothing but the parte of a brother in justefieng and verEFIENG the trewth, and so contynuying shall do as aperteyneth to a prynce of honour, which the Kinge's highnes doubtith not he hathe and will do, onelie in respecte to the veryte and trewth besides the amyte betwixt both them justlie requyring the same.

¹ This sentence is erased in the original draft from which this copy is taken.

And concerning the executions don within this realme ye shall say to the saide Frensh King, that *the same were not so marvelous extreme as he alledgeth for touching Mr. More and the Bisshop of Rochester with such others as were executed here, their treasons conspiracies and practises secretly practised as well within the realme as without to move and styrrer discension and to sowe sedycione within the realme, intending thereby not onely the distrucsyon of the Kyng but also the hole subversion of the same, being explained and declared, and oppynlye detect and so manifestly proved afore them that they coude not avoyde nor denye it, and they thereof lawfully convycted and condemned of high treason by the due order of the lawes of this realme, so that it shall and maye well appere to all the worlde that they havyng such malice roted in their hertes ayenst their prynce and sovereigne and the totall destructione of the commen weale of this realme were well worthie if they had had a thousande lyves to have suffered ten tymes a more terrible deth and execution than any of them did suffer.*

And where as the saide Frensh King sayeth that as touching such lawes as the Kinges highnes hathe made he will not medle withall alledging it not to be mete that one prynce should desyre another to chaunge his lawes, sayeng that his be to olde to be chaunged, to that ye shall sey that such lawes as the Kinges highnes hath made here be not made without substauncyall groundes by grete and mature advise, counsaile and deliberacion of the hole polycie of this realme, and are in deade no new lawes but of grete antiquyte and many yeres passed were made and executed within this realme, as now they

be renovate and renewed onelie in respecte of the common weale of the same. And it is not a litle to his highnes mervaille that the saide French King ever wolde counsaile or advise him if in case hereafter any such like offenders should happen to be in this realme that he should rather banish them then in such wise execute them. And speciallie considering that the saide French King himself in comoning with you at that time not onelie confessed thextreme execucions and grete bruyllie of late don in his realme, but also that he now intendeth to withdraw the same and to revoke and call home agayne such as be out of his realme ; the Kinges highnes thereforth taketh his saide advise and counsaile straungely supposing it neyther thoffice of a frende nor of a brother that he wolde determyne himself to call home into his realme agayne his subjects being out of the same for spekkynge ageynst the Bisshop of Romes usurpyd auctoryte, and counsaile the Kinges highnes to banysshe his traytours into straunge partes where they might have good occasyon, tyme place and oportunyte to worke their feates of treason and conspiracie the better ayenst the Kinges highnes and this his realme. In which parte ye shall somewhat engreave the matier after suche sorte as it may well appere to the saide French King that not onelie the Kynges highnes myght take those his consailes and communycacions with you both straungelie and unkindely, thinking the same not to procede of mere amyte and frendeship, but also using such polycie and austeryte in proponyng the same with the saide French King and the grete Mr., taking such tyme and oportunyte as may best serve for the same, as they

may well perceyve the Kinges highnes proceedings here within his realme both concerning the saide execucions and all other things to be onelie grounded uppon justice and the equyte of his lawes which be no new lawes but auntyent lawes made and established of many yeres passed within this realme and renovate and now renewed as is aforsaid for the better order weale and suretie of the same. And ye may fferther saye that yf the Frenche Kyng and his counsayll well consyder as the owt to do that it were moche better to advaunce the ponyshment off trayters and rebelles ffor theyr offences thenne to punyshe suche as do speke ageynst the usurpid auctortye. And touching suche wordes as the saide Frensh King spake unto you concerning how Mr. More dyed and what he saide to his doughter going to his judgement, and also what exhortacions he should gyve unto the kinges subjects to be trew and obedient to his grace I assure you that there was no suche thing, whereof the gret Mr., promysed you a double at length. In that the kinges pleasure is that ye shall not onelie procure the saide double and sende it hither, but also sey unto the saide Frensh King that the Kinges highnes can not otherwise take it but veray unkyndely that the saide Frensh King or any of his counsaile at whose handes he hathe so moche meryted and to whom he hath mynistred so many grete benefites pleasures and comodytees, shoulde so lightlie gyve eare faith and credence to any suche vayne brutes and fleeng tales, not having first knowledge or advertisement from the Kynges highnes here and his counsaile of the veryte and treweth, affirming it to be the office of a frende if he harde any such

tales of so noble a prynce, rather to have put the tellers to sylens or at the lest not to have dyvulget the saide untyll such tyme as the Kinges Majestie being soo dere a freend hadde bene advertysyd therof and the trewth known; before he should so lightlie beleve or alledge any suche reporte; which argueth playnelie not to remayne in the saide Frensh Kynges brest such integryte of herte and syncere amyte towards the Kynges highnes and his procedinges as his highnes alwayes hertoffore trustyd too; which thing ye may propone and alledge unto the saide Frensh King and the grete Mr. or to oon of them with such modestie and sobrenes as ye thinke they may perceyve that the Kinges highnes hathe good and just cause sumwhat in this parte to take theyr lyght credytt unkyndelye.”¹

* * * * *

(at Thornebery, the 23rd day of August.)

¹ This letter is copied from the original draft in Cromwell's handwriting preserved in MS. Harl. 288, fol. 39-46; it appears to have been corrected and interlined according to the King's dictation. The concluding portion of it may be seen in Strype's *Memorials Ecclesiastical*, v. 1., part 2. p. 251-2, Oxford: 1812, 8vo. Strype has indeed printed it entire, but his version differs in some points from the present, and was certainly taken from another copy; according to him the address ran thus: "To my right loving friend Sir John Wallop Kynght, the Kinges Ambassadour resident in the Corte of Fraunce"—whereas the copy here given is indorsed in a later hand, "Mr. Secretary Cromwelle his letter by the Kynges directyones to the Lydger Ambassador in Fraunce touchinge speches used to him by the Frenche Kyng concernyne the Executyons of Sir Thomas More and Fysher bushope of Rochestere in H. 8. his tyme." Lydger for Leaguer would make it appear that it was written to one of Henry's envoys to the Leaguers of Smalcald, which could not have been the case, Wallop was the person addressed.

LETTER OF POPE PAUL III. TO FERDINAND KING OF
THE ROMANS, CONCERNING THE JUDICIAL
MURDER OF THE CARDINAL BISHOP.

Paulus Papa III. Dilecto Filio Ferdinando Regi
Romanorum Illustri.¹

Charissime Fili salutem, et Apostolicam benedictionem. Non dubitamus jam tuæ serenitati auditum esse de inexorabili nece bonæ memoriæ Joannis Episcopi Roffensis, et Cardinalis nostri, tuamque Majestatem, ut est omni pietate conspicuam, tum dignitate, et sanctitate hominis, tum gratiâ ipsâ, et causâ mortis vehementer fuisse commotam. Nam sive Episcopalem, et Cardinalitiam dignitatem, in quâ Sancti Apostoli referuntur, sive genus mortis per carnificem, sive causam veritatis et justitiæ, pro quâ vir ille sanctus occubuit, consideramus, omnia hujusmodi sunt, ut sicut ab impiissimo profecta sunt, ita potentissimi Regis animum et aures gravissimè offendere debeant. Cum enim Henricus Angliæ Rex separatâ à se impiè, et injustè charissimâ in Christo filiâ nostrâ Catharinâ Angliæ Reginâ, materterâ tuâ cum quâ matrimonium mediante Sedis Apostolicæ dispensatione contraxerat, prolemque ex eâ suscepit, vivente ipsâ Catharinâ Annam adulteram propriâ auctoritate uxorem duxisset, et ad velandum facinus suum, matrimonii cum ipsâ Catharinâ validitatem, et Apostolicæ Sedis potestatem negasset, Ecclesiamque Anglicanam,

¹ Vitæ et Res Gestæ Pontificum Romanorum et S. R. E. Cardinalium, &c. Alphonsi Ciaconii Ordinis Prædicatorum, &c. operâ descriptæ, ab A. Oldoino S. I. recognitæ, 4 tom. fol. Rom. 1677. tom. 3, p. 574-5.

et Regnum illud Sedis Apostolicæ tributarium ab ejusdem Sedis obedientiâ subtraxisset, seque in hæreticorum numerum multipliciter retulisset, multaque alia indigna, et impia commisisset; cumque hæc bonis omnibus desplicerent, ut debent, quotquot improbarent ductionem adulteræ, capi, necari, carcerarique et ultimo supplicio affici fecit; atque hanc ejus impietatem toto triennio patienter tulit universa Christianitas, et hæc Sedes Apostolica, quæ licet illum Regem feudatarium habebat, pastoralis tamen clementiâ toleravit hæc tamen indigna, et resipiscentiam in dies ipsius Henrici sperando patienter expectavit, quòque in irritum cesserint, hæc novissima declarant. Cum enim Nos in eâ Cardinalium creatione, quam proximè habuimus, ipsum Roffensem, adornandam ejus virtutem et sanctitatem, in numerum Cardinalium retulissemus, sperantes eam dignitatem, quæ ubique solita est haberi sacrosancta, non solùm ad amoliendam perniciem, sed, et ad salutem, et liberationem esse valituram; in hâc re Henricum se similem esse voluit, tum sui qui multos alios simili ex causâ necavit, tum Henrici II., progenitoris sui, cujus odio, et persecutione B. Thomas martyr Episc. Cantuariensis occubuit. Nec tamen hic Henricus illius impietatem retulit, verùm et longè superavit. Ille enim unum, hic multò plures, ille unius particularis hic universalis Ecclesiæ jura tuentem, ille Archiepiscopum, hic R. E. Cardinalem neci tradidit. Ille denique qui se purgare Alexandro III. coactus est, culpam in alios rejecit, pœnitentiam sibi à Romano Pontifice impositam humiliter suscepit, hic obstinatissimo animo sceleratissimum factum tuetur, non solùm non ductus pœnitentiâ, verùm

pertinax, et rebellis, hostisque factus. Non quia læsus à Romanâ Ecclesiâ, à quâ est titulo Defensoris decoratus, quem ipse titulum ingratissimè ad offensionem fidei retorsit, sed quia etiam multipliciter læsit. Cum igitur fili charissime Sancta Romana, et universalis Ecclesia magno vulnere dedecore ignominiâque violata sit, patientia ejus semper novas Henrici injurias provocaverit, necessariumque sit cauterio uti, una cum Venerabilibus fratribus nostris S. R. E. Cardd. ad tuam Majestatem, quæ cum suis progenitoribus semper justitiam, probitatem, religionem coluit, et hanc Sedem semper filiali observantiâ reverita est, confugimus, tuam opem, auxilium, et favorem in tantis Ecclesiæ injuriis implorantes, teque per viscera misericordiæ D. N. Jesu Christi enixe obsecrantes, ut cum viâ juris et justitiæ demum Henricum censuræ contemptorem, atque in eâ ultra biennium insordescentem, hæreticum, schismaticum, adulterum notorium, publicum homicidam, et *in* sacrilegum rebellem, et criminis læsæ majestatis multipliciter reum, propterea dicto Regno à jure ipsum privatum, declarare intendimus, Tu cum serenissimo Cæsare fratre tuo, et cæteris Principibus, quorum opem pariter advocamus executioni justitiæ faveas, sicuti speramus, et te pro optimi principis officio, esse facturum, sicut autem plenius ex nuntii ad te missi verbis intelliges. Datum Romæ apud Sanctum Marcum, die 22 Julii, Anno 1535.

The indictment runs as follows, and effectually disproves the falsity of the statements that Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More were executed for other than denial of the King's supremacy, &c. The indictment

was to the following effect : that “one John Fisher, late
“of the city of Rochester, in the county of Kent, clerk,
“otherwise called John Fisher, late Bishop of Rochester,
“not having God before his eyes, but being seduced by
“diabolical instigation, falsly, maliciously and traiter-
“ously wishing, willing, and desiring and by art imagin-
“ing, inventing, practising, and attempting to deprive
“our most serene Lord Henry the Eighth by the Grace
“of God King of England and France and Lord of
“Ireland, and on earth Supreme Head of the Church
“of England, of the dignity, title and name of His Royal
“State, *viz.*, of his dignity, title and name of Supreme
“Head on earth of the Church of England annexed and
“united to His said Imperial Crown as is aforesaid, did
“on the *seventh* day of May in the 27th year of the said
“King’s reign at the Tower of London in the county of
“Middlesex, contrary to his allegiance, falsly, maliciously,
“and traiterously speak and utter these words in English
“to divers of His Majestie’s faithful subjects, *viz.*, *the*
“*King our sovereign Lord is not supreme Head in earth*
“*of the Church of England*, to the despite and manifest
“contempt of the said Lord the King, and the derogation
“and no small prejudice of the Title and Name of His
“Royal State, and contrary to the form of another act
“passed in the 26th year of the King’s reign, &c.”

2759

